PLAY METER Magazine

VOLUME 22, No. 11 · FOR THE COIN-OP ENTERTAINMENT/FEC INDUSTRY · OCTOBER 1996

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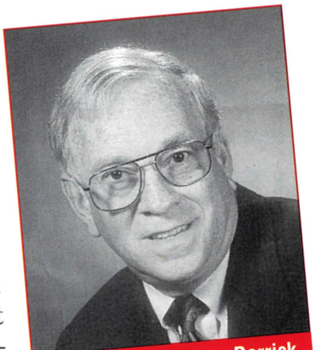
News BULLETIN

WICO STILL ON THE MAP

As Mark Twain once said, “The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated.” In this case, the widely held notion that Wico Dist. Corp. closed its doors is apparently not the case. Wico is indeed alive and well and based in Niles, Ill., where its distribution warehouse is located. Wico, which filed under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code, has been reorganizing and soon will be in the hands of new owners. The company continues to offer a complete line of parts, supplies, and accessories for the industry. Wico can be reached at its longtime number, (800)367-9426. Look for more details in our next issue.

WELCOME, MR. PRESIDENT


AMOA president Jerry Derrick.

Jerry Derrick of Derrick Music Co. in Charleston, W.Va., has assumed the reigns of president of AMOA. Derrick succeeds Randy Chilton of Chilton Vending Co. in Wichita, Kan. Derrick officially took over his new post at the AMOA annual business meeting. A reception in his honor was held during AMOA Expo ‘96. One of Derrick’s first duties will be to represent AMOA at his state’s 42nd convention Oct. 17-18 at the Ramada Inn in S. Charleston, W.Va. (Full Expo coverage appears next month.)

PLAY IT AGAIN, ON THE JUKEBOX

November is national jukebox month and all jukebox operators are reminded to start promoting their music machines. Ideas used in the past include colorful signs on tables in locations, posters, radio advertising, and even a contest that awards a jukebox as the grand prize.

A starting point could be advising customers of AMOA’s Top 40 Jukebox Singles of All Time, available on your jukeboxes of course! The list includes such favorites as “Crazy” by Patsy Cline (#1-1962), “Mack the Knife” by Bobby Darin (#5-1959), “The Dock of the Bay” by Otis Redding (#9-1968), and “Louie, Louie” by the Kingsmen (#19-1963). The list was first released in 1989 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the jukebox; it was updated in 1992 and again this year. A copy can be obtained from AMOA if not already in-hand.

Here’s a little AMOA Top 40 trivia: only three artists made the list twice—Patsy Cline, The Beatles, and the Rolling Stones; only one artist made the list three times—Elvis Presley. New to the list are “Friends in Low Places” by Garth Brooks, “Pretty Woman” by Roy Orbison, “I Can’t Get No Satisfaction” by the Rolling Stones; “Sweet Home Alabama” by Lynyrd Skynyrd, “Brown-Eyed Girl” by Van Morrison, “Strokin’” by Clarence Carter, “All Shook Up” by Elvis Presley, and “Joy to the World” by Three Dog Night. Songs from the ‘60s captured the most spots (20); next came the ‘70s with eight, the ‘50s with seven, the ‘80s with four, and the ‘90s with one.

PROMOTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

◆ Jim Vanderhoof has joined the staff of Photo Vend Intl. as national sales manager. He has logged seven years in the coin-op industry with a career that has included sales positions at both Sega and Capcom. Vanderhoof, who will be based in Photo Vend’s Pleasanton, Calif., office, can be reached at (510)468-7500. The company exhibited its *FP-4 Photo Booth* at the AMOA Expo ‘96 and will also show the product at Fun Expo ‘96.

◆ The Bankshot Organization has made three staff changes: Jeffrey Sheiber has been promoted from director of marketing and communications to vice president; Erik Swain has been promoted to fill the post of director of marketing; and Catherine Pfund has been named director of public relations.

WEB WATCH

◆ Sega GameWorks (SGW) has introduced the SGW Service Page on the World Wide Web (http://www.sgwservice.com), which features important technical information for companies operating SGW equipment. Browsers can receive important service information including a local distributor search, parts search, and access to manuals and assembly drawings. The site includes link-ups to SGW service staff members and some of the industry’s most useful Web sites, as well as a peek into the office of SGW service director and Web site creator Darl Davidson (click on “What’s Going on in Darl’s Office”).

◆ Imagination Leisure has established a new Web site (http:/www.imagines.com) that features complete descriptions and pictures of *Neon Aire, Rainbow Aire,* and *SST* air cushion hockey games as well as a technical support area with complete wiring diagrams and schematics to help operators. In addition, the company’s parts catalog can be found online. Easy e-mail links make it simple to communicate with the company (imagine@panix.com).

SEIDEL ADDS FIRE TO *SMOKIN’*

Seidel Amusement Machine Co. has introduced a programmable header for its successful *Smokin’ Token* and *Goin’ Rollin’* coin drop games that now puts splashy graphics on the

News BULLETIN

headers at the top of the games. The moving programmable sign can be used to customize a message as it draws attention to the games. The header will be shown at Seidel's booth at both the Fun Expo and IAAPA.

MINNESOTA APPROVES *GOLDEN TEE TOURNAMENT*

Bulldog Amusements Inc. informs that the attorney general for the state of Minnesota has approved Incredible Technologies' International Tournament System (ITS) to operate the *Peter Jacobsen's Golden Tee 3-D Golf Tournament* game. Bulldog, which is the exclusive distributor for the game, credits Linda Winstead and Hal Lieberman of Lieberman Music Co. for working to assure that the game will soon be available to Minnesota operators.

In other ITS news, there is a mandatory E-PROM update for all *Tournament* edition games that will be available early this month. These new program chips must be installed before the next tournament begins on Oct. 18. Games that are not updated will not receive tournament data. New E-PROMS come through distributors at no charge; old E-PROMS must be returned or there will be a charge for them. New code features include up to 40 national winners, a ball-out button press for players who wish to start over, support for special events and prizes, modified tournament courses, and better communications software.

SKEE-BALL EXPANDS IN PHOENIX

In response to the company's growth and service requirements, Skee-Ball Inc. has expanded its production facility in Phoenix, Ariz. The new plant adds 15,000 square feet for a larger final assembly line, woodworking area, parts and shipping department, cable shop, and partial game storage. The original 20,000-square-foot plant will maintain the division's administrative offices. The physical reorganization allows for expanded metal fabrication, welding, and the company's new powder-coat paint system that was installed in April. Technical support and engineering areas are also enlarging. The recent addition of the prize vending product line and the new *Super Shot Junior* basketball game contributed to the need for expansion.

AUSTRALIA COURT RULING

The National Amusement Machine Operators Association Ltd. of Australia has issued an operator advisory. In the case of Galaxy and Gottlieb vs. Sega/Avel, the federal court made the following orders in relation to a judgment handed down Aug. 28: 1) *Virtua Cop* and *Daytona Twin* embody a cinematographic film which is a cinematographic film within the meaning of Section 10(1) of the Copyright Act; 2) The copyright subsists in the cinematographic film embodied in *Virtua Cop* and *Daytona Twin* and is owned by Sega Enterprises Ltd., 3) The decision is currently on appeal for the full federal court; 4) Subject to the outcome of the appeal operators may not sell, hire, publicly display, or otherwise trade in video games which have been imported into Australia without the license of the owner of the copyright in the games, and 5) The liability of Galaxy and Gottlieb to Sega/Avel for damages is yet to be determined in these proceedings.

LATE, LATE OPEN HOUSE UPDATE

◆ Moss Distributing will host a post-AMOA open house Oct. 16, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., at its Des Moines, Iowa, office at 1801 Guthrie Ave.

◆ Atlas Distributing will welcome friends and customers at its post-AMOA open house Oct. 10, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., in he Chicago office at 4500 W. Dickens Ave.

Please turn to page 28 in "Coin-Op News" for more open house dates. ▲

Skee-Ball Inc.'s expanded Phoenix, Ariz., facility.

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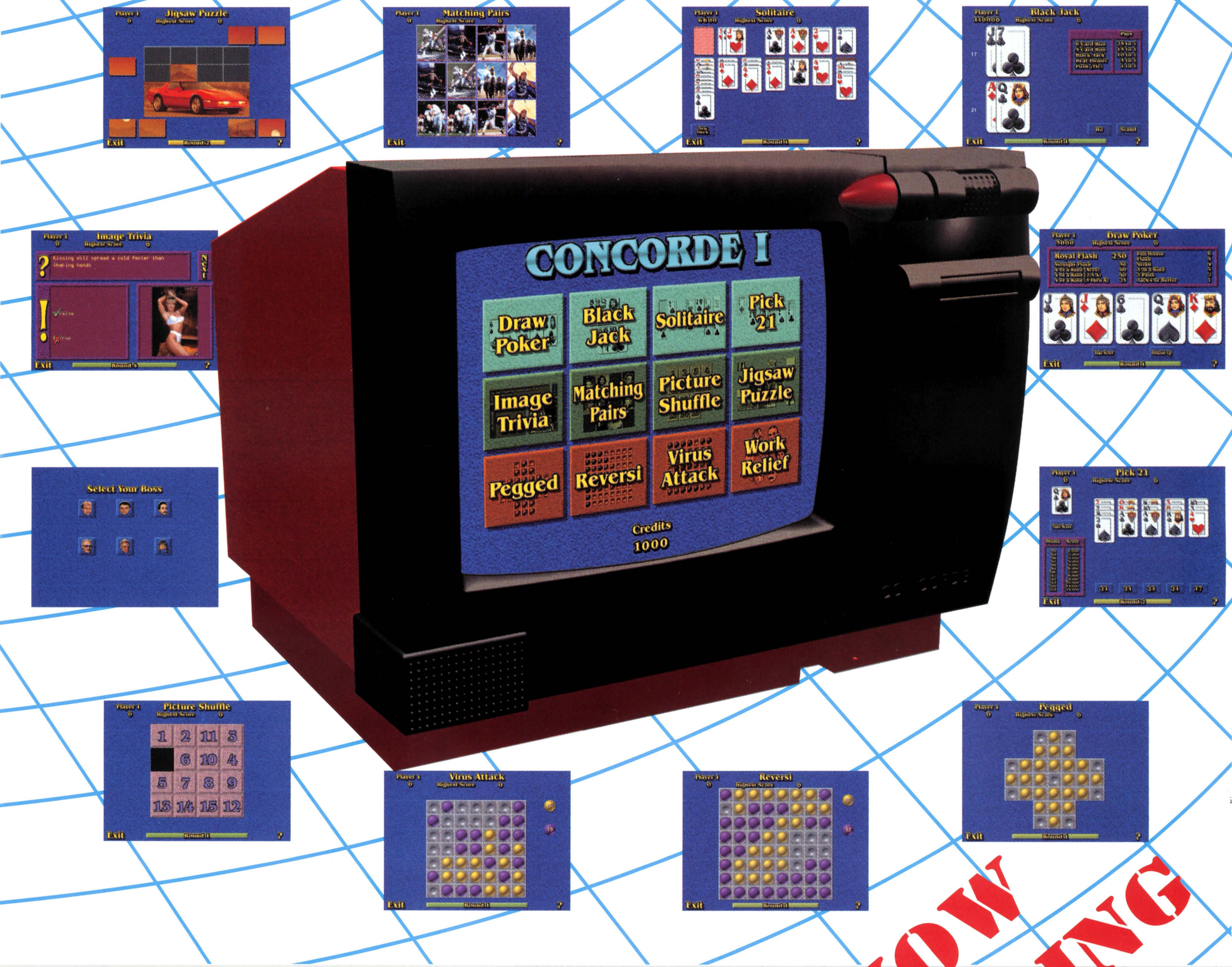
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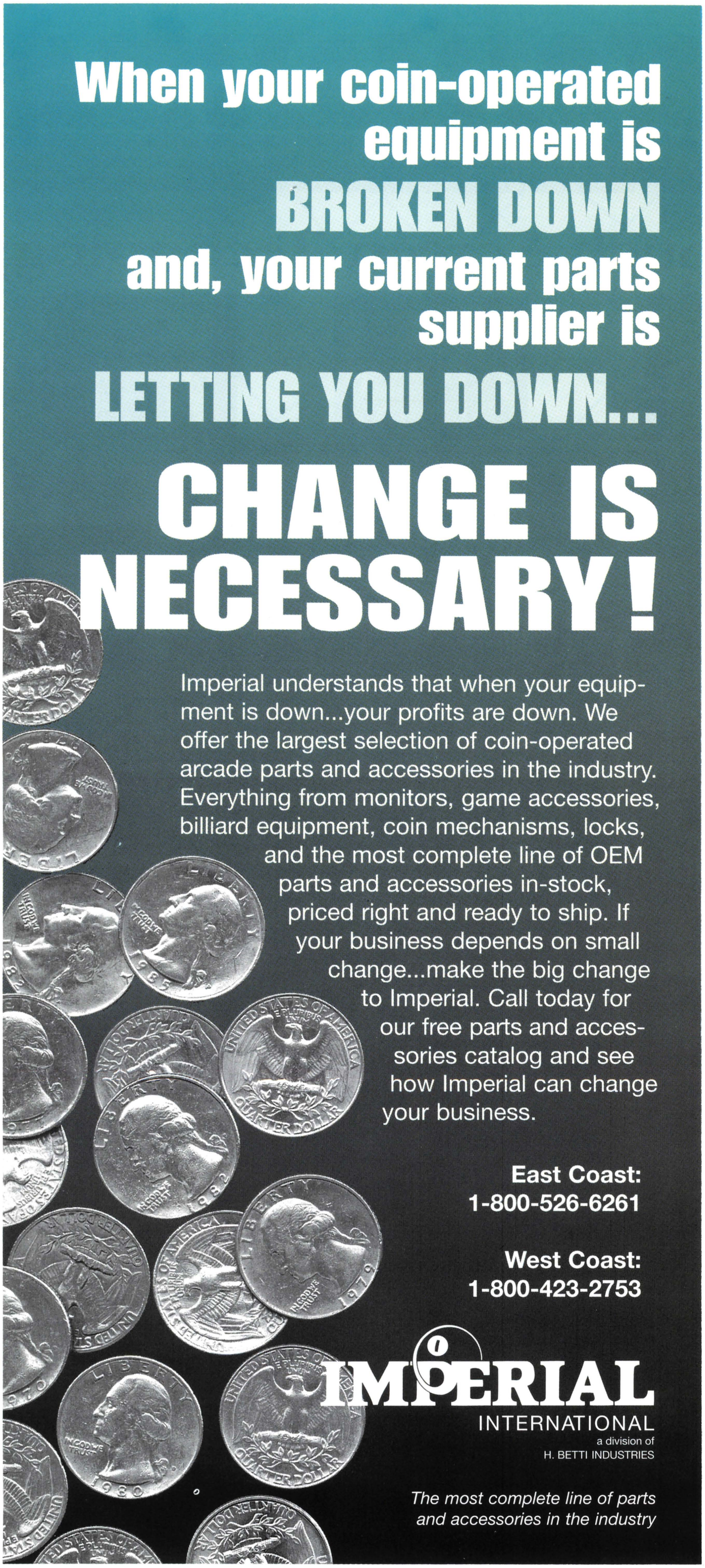
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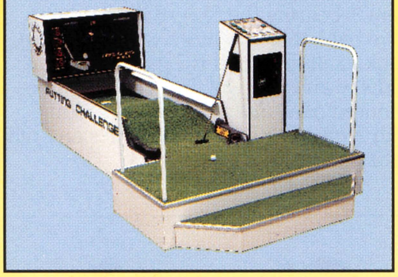

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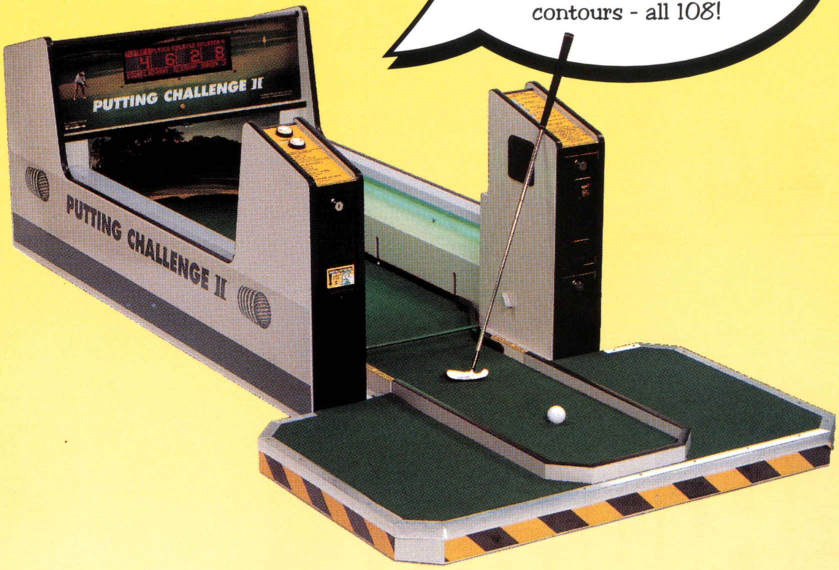

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INDOOR FUN: MORE THAN CHILD'S PLAY

Modular play systems challenge both the imagination and the physical prowess of youngsters while delivering a satisfying long play time. With today's sophisticated customers of all ages the mere presence of tubes, cubes, and slides is not enough to keep them coming back. Find out what's new on the horizon for these unique play experiences.

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COINMAN: HAROLD SKRIPSKY

The late comedian Jackie Gleason reminded TV wife Audrey Meadows in "The Honeymooners" that he was "king of the castle." In the coin-op world Harold Skripsky really is king of the Castle—the 46,000-square-foot Enchanted Castle family entertainment complex in Lombard, Ill. Learn more about how the Castle evolved and achieved megacenter status.

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FUN EXPO PREVIEW

Host city Las Vegas continues to undergo a transformation; it's never the same on any return visits. So too with the Fun Expo, the FEC trade event that continues to grow in terms of exhibitors and to draw newcomers and old pros alike. Get a handle on what to see and do in Las Vegas (not the usual), plus peruse the activity schedule and exhibitor list.

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COVER

Games bearing the Skee-Ball Inc. name have bankability in more ways than one. Look at almost any FEC game room or midway and you will find a row of time-honored *Skee-Ball* alley bowlers along with *Super Shot* basketball games and other Skee-Ball Inc. titles.

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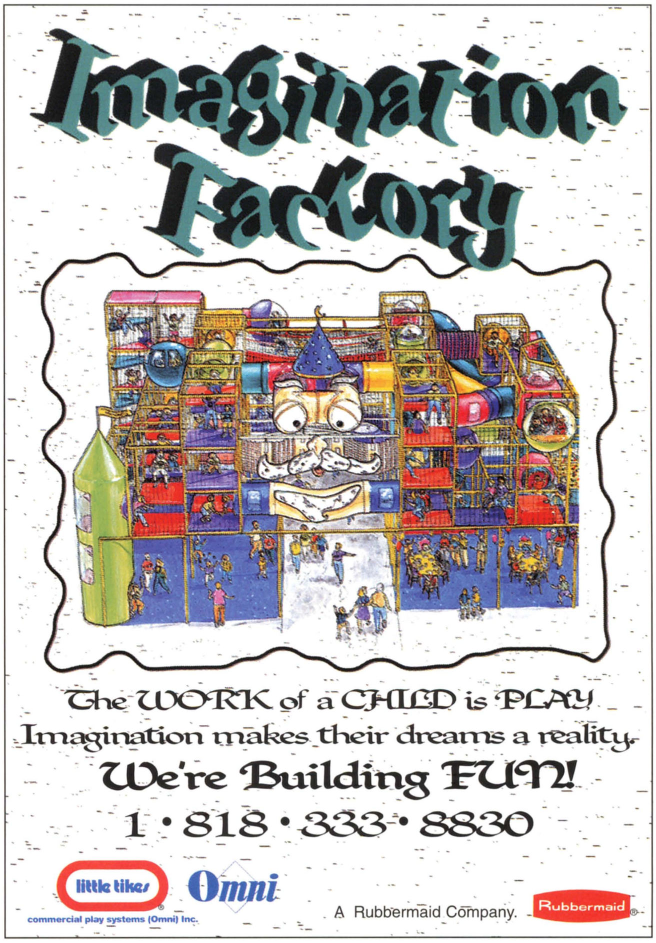

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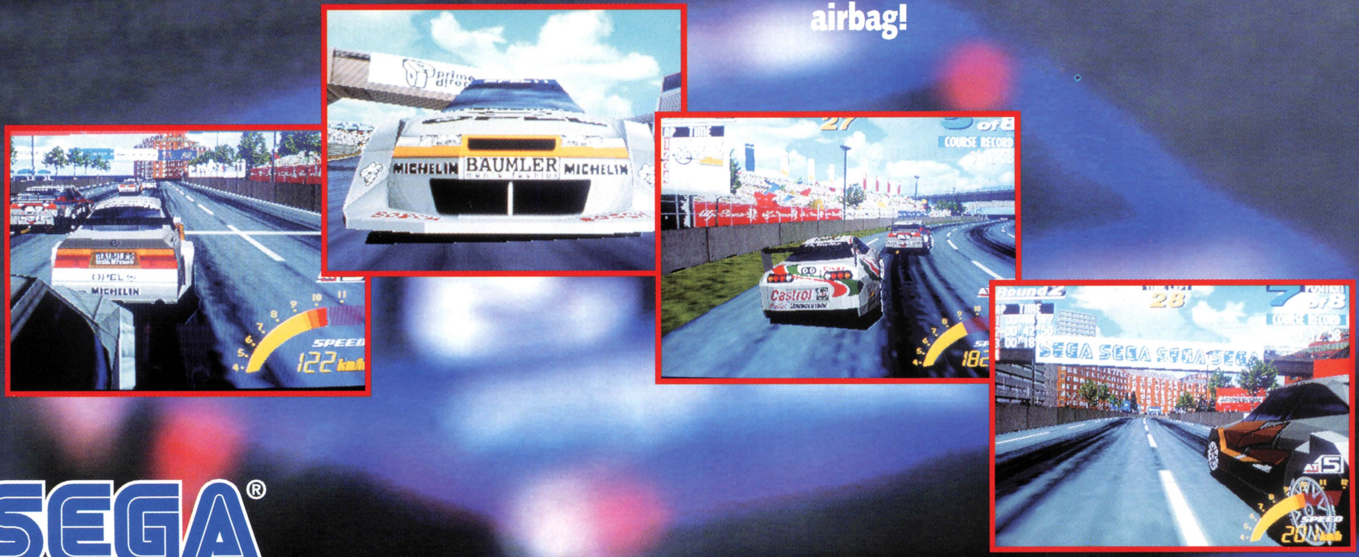
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FROM THE **EDITOR**

Looking for grass in all the WRONG PLACES

We moved about three years ago into a house that was 30 years old. As anyone who has ever moved into an older house knows, there's plenty to do. We have painted, refloored, knocked out walls, painted some more, added on, built a patio, changed some carpet, and done some remodeling in the kitchen. This is to name a few of the things we've already had to do and only a portion of what we still have left to do.

VALERIE COGNEVICH

But we reached a point in the inside of the house when it was time for a critical look at the yard. We went straight to surrender and decided to plant all new grass. We asked ourselves: what could be so hard about ordering some grass in those welcome mat-sized pieces, plopping them in the yard, and watching those succulent green blades adorn the now-barren landscape.

The grass was delivered. We spent the entire day placing the pieces in the yard. Voila! It wouldn't be long now until our yard looked like our neighbors' lawns, the one who has a professional taking care of everything and the other one who wins the "garden of the month" award quite often.

My husband and I took turns faithfully turning on the sprinkler every morning and every evening unless it rained. We kept up the vigil until one of us finally mustered the courage to ask, "Is any of that grass still alive?" It was painfully obvious that the grass was dying and the only green in the yard was weeds, the same weeds that had been in the yard before we put down the new sod.

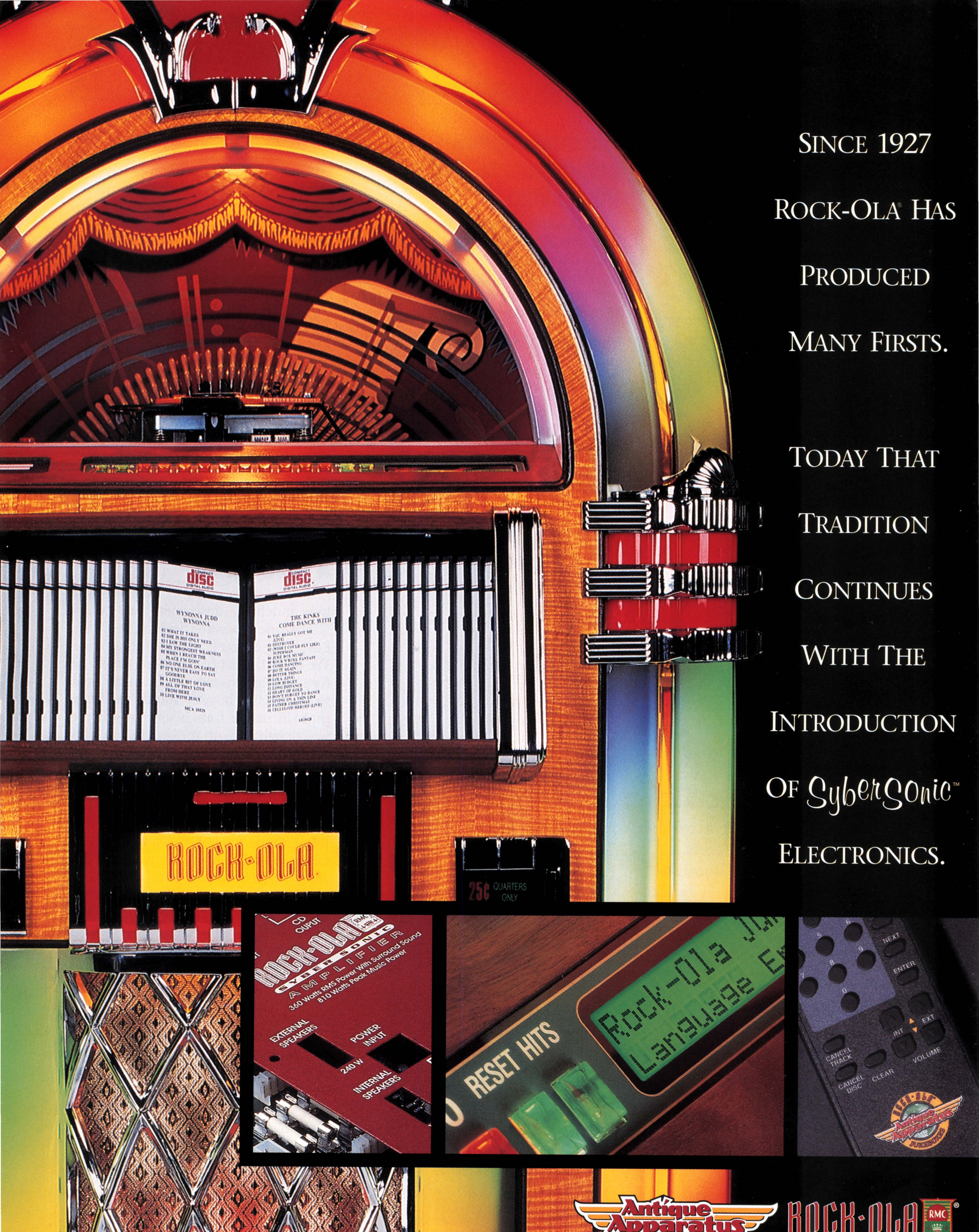
Where did we go wrong? What could possibly be so complicated about growing grass in your darn yard? With our lawn looking worse than it did when it really looked terrible, we called in a professional. He took one look and confirmed our suspicions with these dreaded words: "Your grass is dead." Then he started asking us stuff like "what type of fertilizer did you use?" and "how much and what kind of top soil did you use to prepare the yard?" Fertilizer? Prepare the yard? Top soil?

It was right there and then, in the middle of hundreds of dollars worth of dead grass, that I felt like a location owner who has suddenly realized why it's better to call in a professional operator than to make expensive mistakes with games.

How many times have we heard newcomers to the industry bragging about buying their own games and keeping 100 percent of the revenue instead of "giving away" half of it. I guess we've heard that statement about as many times as professional landscapers have heard people like me say: "What's to know about planting grass?"

It always seems so easy when you don't really know everything there is to know. I'm sure many of you figure it's no big deal to put together a magazine every month, writing lots of articles, and trying to line up interviews. I've seen people gung-ho about writing articles for us but soon confess that they didn't know it would be so hard to pen something every month. Seems a lot easier when you're not really doing it.

If you thought it would be more rewarding to buy your own games and are having second thoughts, call in a professional. Maybe you'll lose a few bucks, but believe me, it's better to cut your losses now instead of continuing to throw good money after bad. You don't want your business to be as dead as my grass. ▲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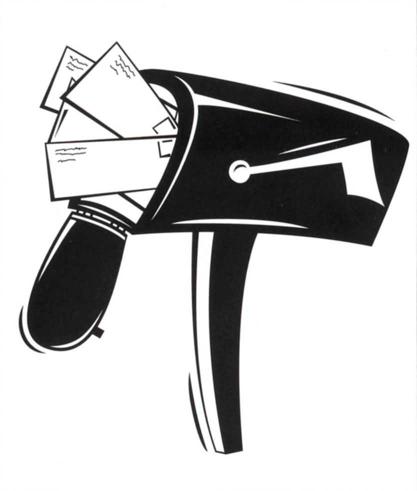

The manufacturers are coming: something to think about

This letter should have gone out a long time ago. As most of you are aware, a few manufacturers that have supplied us with some of the most popular games we operators have on our routes are also in the arcade business.

It's a good thing. Their mega arcades project a positive light onto the coin-op business. But the problem is that two manufacturers in particular are now going after relatively small locations in our area.

Yes, manufacturers we've supported for years are competing directly with us for locations that a few years ago you never would have thought they'd bother with. You better be aware of who they are because they are coming to an area near you, if they are not already there.

Are we worried? No. If they want to get down and slug it out in the trenches with the rest of us that's their right. But it has made a significant difference when we purchase new equipment. Manufacturer A or Manufacturer B? The choice has gotten a lot clearer to us. Think about it

Rick Davies
Big Time Amusement
Las Vegas, Nev.

A good job

I wanted to write to let you know how much we appreciated the story, "Ultrazone Operator Seeking to Define Laser Tag Market," in the August issue. We think the list of questions to ask before buying a system will be very useful to prospective buyers. You should know that Ultrazone franchisee, Troy Peple, was delighted with the article. He felt it was a totally accurate reflection of the interview and he loved it.

I also want to thank you for your supportive words in the "From the Editor" column in the June issue. My husband and business partner, Barry Eigen, was the speaker mentioned in connection with the family entertainment conference. It's always a treat to get a good review! Others must have enjoyed his presentation because he has been asked to speak at the Fun Expo in Las Vegas in October.

Diane Eigen
Eigen & Associates
Milwaukee, Wisc.

First I want to thank you for your kind words on the Ultrazone article. Our associate editor Steve White has been doing a series of articles on laser tag as a direct result of the requests we've gotten both in writing and e-mail.

Diane, your husband is a dynamic, thought-provoking, entertaining speaker and I'd certainly encourage everyone attending Fun Expo to seek him out. They won't be disappointed.

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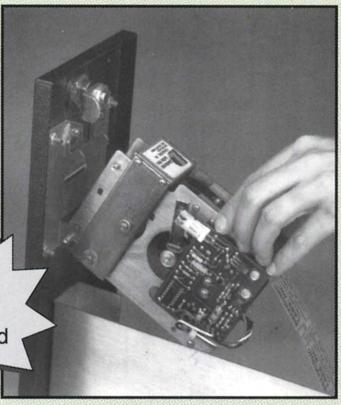

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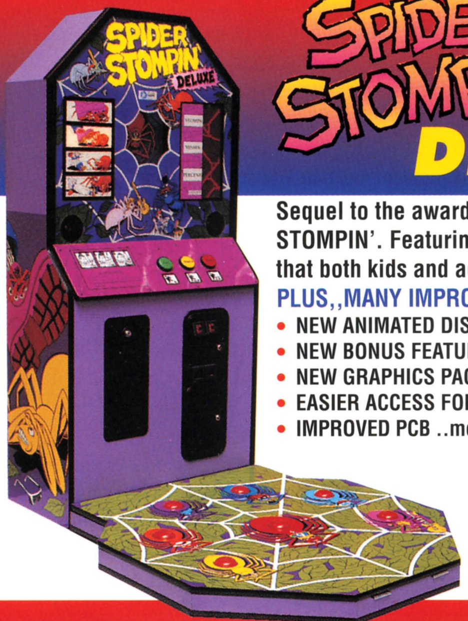

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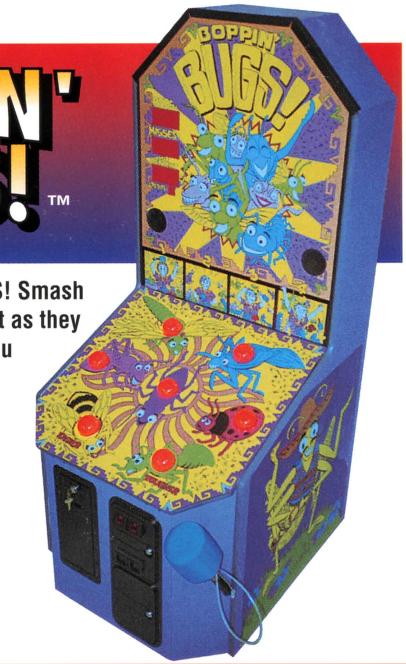
DIMENSIONS

57"L x 41"W x 66" H

weight 250 lbs.

BOPPIN' BUGS!™



Get slap happy with BOPPIN' BUGS! Smash those pesky "bugs" with the mallet as they light up the playfield. The faster you squash 'em the faster they light up

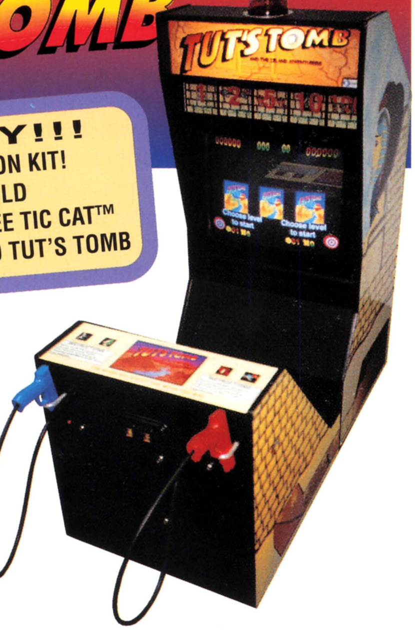
- EXCITING MUSIC
- GREAT SOUND EFFECTS
- CONTAGIOUS FUN GAME PLAY
- FULLY OPERATOR ADJUSTABLE

DIMENSIONS

37"L x 32"W x 72" H

weight 250 lbs.

TUT'S TOMB™



GREAT BUY!!!

LOW COST CONVERSION KIT!

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MINERS REVENGE™ TICKEE TIC CAT™

and GHOST HUNTER™ INTO TUT'S TOMB

High earning two player shooting redemption video game.

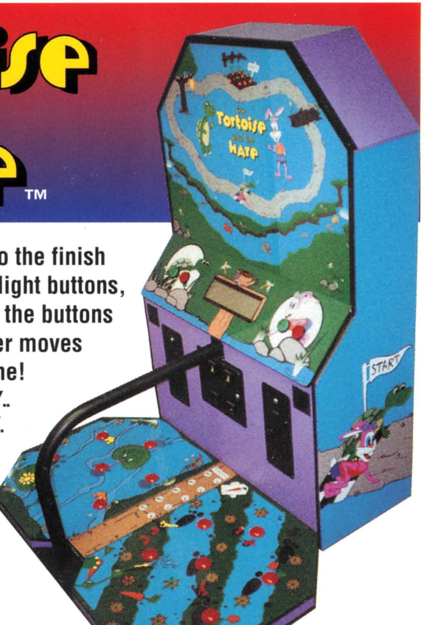
- NON VIOLENT.
- ATTRACTIVE GRAPHICS AND SOUND.
- POPULAR WITH BOTH SEXES.
- APPEALING ANIMATION.

DIMENSIONS

59"L x 29" W x 67 H

weight 300 lbs.

Tortoise and the Hare™



High speed, two player stomp to the finish game. Players try to stomp on light buttons, the faster they stomp the faster the buttons light up and the faster the player moves around the track to the finish line!

- ANIMATED DOT MATRIX DISPLAY.. ATTRACTS SPECTATORS TO PLAY.
- ILLUMINATED SCORE DISPLAY ON FOOT PAD.
- SAFETY BAR HELPS PLAYERS KEEP THEIR BALANCE.
- SPECIAL NON-SKID FLOOR.

DIMENSIONS

57"L x 65" W x 77 H

weight 300 lbs.

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SPIDER STOMPIN'' DELUXE™ AND BOPPIN BUGS™ © 1996
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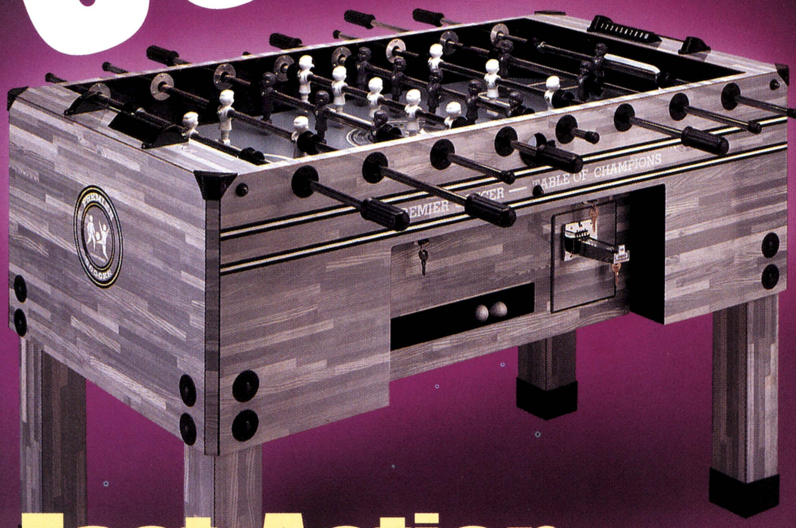
Developed and manufactured by Island Design Inc.



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A hard line on a soft issue

I am writing on behalf of Soft Play, L.L.C. As I am sure you know, Soft Play, L.L.C. is a manufacturer of playground and amusement park equipment.

Soft Play, L.L.C. markets its playground and amusement park equipment under the trademark SOFT PLAY in Class 28. Soft Play, L.L.C. is the owner of Federal Registration No. 1,628,428 for SOFT PLAY.

Soft Play, L.L.C. has extensively used and promoted the SOFT PLAY mark at considerable expense and effort, over a long period of time, with the result that Soft Play, L.L.C. has developed extensive good will in the SOFT PLAY mark and the mark has become a valuable asset. The federally registered SOFT PLAY trademark identifies Soft Play, L.L.C.'s rights in its federally registered mark SOFT PLAY.

We must insist that you not use the phrase "soft play" either to indicate a source of goods other than those of Soft Play, L.L.C. or to indicate a type of goods. The name for such goods is playground and amusement park equipment; however, there are more sepcific names for each type of such equipment. We must insist that you not use the phrase "soft play" in its entirety other than as our federally registered trademark and that you refer to all such products by their appropriate general or specific names.

Be advised that Soft Play, L.L.C. will be vigilant in protecting its rights in the trademark and in all of its intellectual property. If your company continues its improper use of our SOFT PLAY mark or confusingly similar language which might cause a likelihood of confusion as to the source of the products, Soft Play L.L.C. would take legal action to enforce its rights.

Ken Schober
Soft Play, L.L.C.
Charlotte, NC

Be assured that Play Meter will use the term soft activity zones, as does the International Association of Family Entertainment Centers or soft modular play. We are printing Ken's letter to warn others that may not be aware that soft play is a trademarked name. Coincidentally, this letter came as the result of a solicitation to companies making the soft modular play equipment so we could write a story about it. ▲

A WHOLE NEW LOOK AT AMUSEMENTS, MUSIC & GAMES

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Equipment Poll

VIDEO & PINBALL COMBINED

GAME	MO. ON CHART	MO. IN TOP 10
1. Daytona USA *(Sega)*	25	25
2. Prop Cycle *(Namco)*	1	1
3. Cruis'n USA *(Midway)*	23	23
4. Virtual On *(Sega)*	1	1
5. Attack From Mars *(Bally)*	6	5
6. Area 51 *(Atari)*	10	10
7. Time Crises *(Namco)*	6	6
8. Golden Tee 3D Golf *(Incred. Tech)*	11	4
9. Alpine Racer *(Namco)*	10	10
10. Touchmaster *(Williams)*	1	1
11. Metal Slug *(SNK)*	4	1
12. Megatouch IV *(Merit)*	5	4
13. Manx TT *(Sega)*	6	2
14. Tekken 2 *(Namco)*	12	9
15. Arabian Nights *(Williams)*	2	*
16. Theatre of Magic *(Bally)*	17	9
17. Sega Rally *(Sega)*	12	3
18. Indy 500 Twin *(Sega)*	6	*
19. The Addams Family *(Bally)*	55	46
20. COPS *(Atari)*	16	1
21. Soul Edge II *(Namco)*	2	*
22. Twister *(Sega)*	3	*
23. Marvel Super Heroes *(Capcom)*	9	1
24. Virtua Cop 2 *(Sega)*	10	4
25. NBA Hang Time *(Midway)*	4	1
26. Magical Touch *(Micro)*	8	2
27. Bust-A-Move Again *(Taito)*	9	1
28. Solitaire Challenge *(Dynamo)*	27	10
29. Megatouch *(Merit)*	12	5
30. Concorde 1 *(JVL)*	1	*
31. Apollo 13 *(Sega)*	7	*
32. Street Fighter Alpha 2 *(Capcom)*	3	*
33. Cyber Cycles *(Namco)*	12	5
34. Road Show *(Williams)*	22	11
35. D&D Shadow Over Mystara *(Capcom)*	5	*
36. OutRunners *(Sega)*	36	21
37. T-MEK *(Atari)*	22	3
38. Lucky & Wild *(Namco)*	38	5
39. Tournament Solitaire *(Dynamo)*	11	1
40. Who Dunnit *(Bally)*	7	1
41. Star Trek: TNG *(Williams)*	33	23
42. War Gods *(Midway)*	1	*
43. Art of Fighting 3 *(SNK)*	1	*
44. Break Shot *(Capcom)*	2	*
45. Virtua Cop *(Sega)*	19	11
46. Windjammers *(SNK)*	7	2
47. Run and Gun 2 *(Konami)*	4	*
48. The Flintstones *(Williams)*	17	4
49. Big Hurt *(Premier)*	7	1
50. Goldeneye *(Sega)*	4	*
51. World Class Bowling *(Incredible Tech.)*	3	*
52. Safecracker *(Williams)*	3	*
53. Virtua Fighter 2 *(Sega)*	20	12
54. Viper Phase 1 *(Fabtek)*	9	1
55. Point Blank *(Namco)*	13	1
56. World Cup Soccer *(Bally)*	27	18
57. Soul Edge *(Namco)*	7	2
58. Indy 500 *(Sega)*	4	*
59. Suzuka 8 Hours 2 *(Namco)*	28	19
60. Great 1000 Mile Rally 2 *(Kaneko)*	3	*

VIDEO DEDICATED

GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1. Daytona USA *(Sega)*	9.45	1485
2. Prop Cycle *(Namco)*	9.00	59
3. Cruis'n USA *(Midway)*	8.92	1342
4. Virtual On *(Sega)*	8.67	57
5. Time Crisis *(Namco)*	8.60	337
6. Alpine Racer *(Namco)*	8.38	567
7. Manx TT *(Sega)*	8.00	298
8. Sega Rally *(Sega)*	7.83	523
9. Indy 500 Twin *(Sega)*	7.78	272
10. COPS *(Atari)*	7.67	434
11. Virtua Cop 2 *(Sega)*	7.54	462
12. NBA Hang Time *(Midway)*	7.47	181
13. Solitaire Challenge *(Dynamo)*	7.40	1078
14. Cyber Cycles *(Namco)*	7.00	521

VIDEO KITS

GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1. Area 51 *(Atari)*	8.63	556
2. Golden Tee 3D Golf *(Incred. Tech)*	8.40	488
3. Touchmaster *(Williams)*	8.33	51
4. Metal Slug *(SNK)*	8.21	200
5. Megatouch IV *(Merit)*	8.11	268
6. Tekken 2 *(Namco)*	7.96	647
7. Soul Edge II *(Namco)*	7.67	80
8. Marvel Super Heroes *(Capcom)*	7.61	337
9. Magical Touch *(Micro)*	7.45	292
10. Bust-A-Move Again *(Taito)*	7.43	312
11. Megatouch *(Merit)*	7.31	560
12. Concorde 1 *(JVL)*	7.25	31
13. Street Fighter Alpha 2 *(Capcom)*	7.21	80
14. D&D Shadow Over Mystara *(Capcom)*	6.83	160
15. Tournament Solitaire *(Dynamo)*	6.71	263
16. Art of Fighting 3 *(SNK)*	6.63	18
17. Windjammers *(SNK)*	6.50	167
18. World Class Bowling *(Incredible Tech.)*	6.29	60
19. Viper Phase 1 *(Fabtek)*	6.27	236
20. Point Blank *(Namco)*	6.25	372
21. Soul Edge *(Namco)*	6.24	242
22. Great 1000 Mile Rally 2 *(Kaneko)*	6.20	44
23. Tekken *(Namco)*	6.19	726
24. Raiden II *(Fabtek)*	6.18	785
25. Super Sidekicks 3 *(SNK)*	6.14	41

PINBALLS

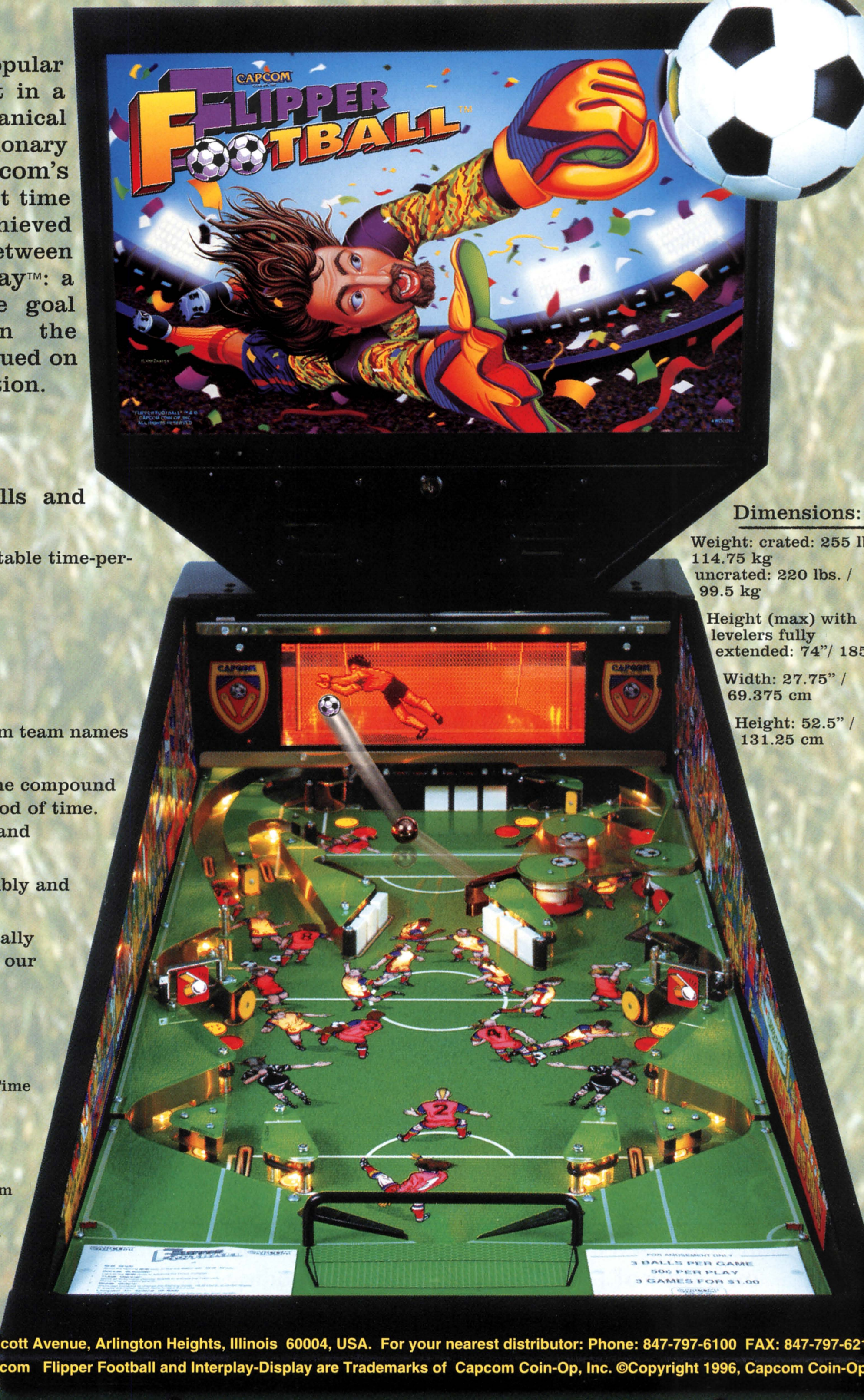
GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1. Attack From Mars *(Bally)*	8.67	324
2. Arabian Nights *(Williams)*	7.90	86
3. Theatre of Magic *(Bally)*	7.86	841
4. The Addams Family *(Bally)*	7.71	2891
5. Twister *(Sega)*	7.67	103
6. Apollo 13 *(Sega)*	7.23	232
7. Road Show *(Williams)*	6.90	684
8. Who Dunnit *(Bally)*	6.69	240
9. Star Trek: TNG *(Williams)*	6.68	1481
10. Break Shot *(Capcom)*	6.57	29
11. The Flintstones *(Williams)*	6.38	348
12. Big Hurt *(Premier)*	6.36	100
13. Goldeneye *(Sega)*	6.30	54
14. Safecracker *(Williams)*	6.29	71

SCORE BIG WITH FLIPPER FOOTBALL™

CAPCOM
COIN-OP, INC.

THE GAME:

Flipper Football takes the most popular sport in the world, and delivers it in a 20"x46" coin-operated, electromechanical replica. It is the first of a revolutionary new genre of games based on Capcom's "Interplay Display™". For the first time ever in any game, we have achieved actual, synchronized interaction between ball play and the Interplay Display™: a 3-dimensional ball is shot at the goal (under the display, located on the playfield) and its progress is continued on the display in 2-dimensional animation.



FEATURES:

Flipper Football has all the frills and thrills of a real soccer game:

- "Timed-play game" with an operator-adjustable time-per-coin feature
- Penalty kicks
- Free kicks
- Burn-the-goalie shots
- Yellow and red penalty cards
- Operator-adjustable option of having custom team names entered in the display.
- "Highest goal-getter" table that contains the compound scores of individual players over a set period of time. This feature is perfect for possible league and championship prize winning set-ups.
- Smaller, lighter backbox for easy disassembly and transportation.
- Menacing presence of a referee (unequivocally hated for his always controversial calls; in our game players can hit him, of course!)

Dimensions:

Weight: crated: 255 lbs. / 114.75 kg
uncrated: 220 lbs. / 99.5 kg

Height (max) with levelers fully extended: 74"/ 185 cm

Width: 27.75" / 69.375 cm

Height: 52.5" / 131.25 cm

TECHNICAL INNOVATIONS:

- Automatic Troubleshooting for Reduced Repair Time
- Short Circuit Protected Lamps and Solenoids
- The Best Dot Matrix Display in the Industry - High Resolution Display: 256 x 64 dots
- One Coil Type on Most Features
- Exclusive MB III™ Super High-Tech Sound System Featuring Multi-MPEG Sound Processing
- All-New Playfield Access System with Multi-Level Lift Bracketing for Simplified Servicing and Troubleshooting
- Lamp Warming for Prolonged Life

CAPCOM®
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Equipment Poll

REDEMPTION

ALLEY BOWLERS

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1.	Bug Bash *(Bay Tek)*	10.00	215
2.	Skee-Ball Lightning *(Skee-Ball)*	7.40	392
3.	Skee-Ball *(Skee-Ball)*	7.33	276
4.	Striker *(Design Plus)*	7.33	286
5.	Smartball *(Smart)*	6.90	80

SPORTS GAMES

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1.	Home Run Derby *(ICE)*	9.00	58
2.	Hoop It Up *(Atari)*	8.00	475
3.	Full Court Fever *(ICE)*	7.80	299
4.	Super Shot *(Skee-Ball)*	7.50	219
5.	Full Court Frenzy *(ICE)*	7.36	121
6.	Shoot to Win *(Smart)*	6.82	259
7.	Hoop Shot *(ICE)*	6.50	13
8.	UB-QB Football *(Skee-Ball)*	6.11	90
9.	Slugfest *(Williams)*	6.00	3
10.	Rage in the Cage *(Fun Merchants)*	5.67	154
11.	Arm Champs *(Jaleco)*	5.50	74
12.	Putting Challenge II *(G.L. Tech.)*	5.50	51

SINGLE COIN PUSHERS

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1.	Jungle Jive *(Coastal)*	8.14	544
2.	Klondike/Gold Coast *(ICE)*	7.60	336
3.	Rock 'N Roll/Dino Valley *(ICE)*	7.00	646

SINGLE CRANES

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1.	Gift Box *(Fun Merchants)*	8.00	304
2.	Pit Stop *(Smart)*	7.50	37
3.	Rainbow *(Rainbow)*	7.50	200
4.	Candy Crane *(Smart)*	7.43	231
5.	Clean Sweep *(Smart)*	7.36	315
6.	Big Choice *(Fun Merchants)*	7.25	239
7.	Action Claw *(Fun Merchants)*	7.00	201
8.	Classic Watch Crane *(Smart)*	6.67	302
9.	Candy Man *(Fun Merchants)*	6.50	110
10.	Skill Crane *(Grayhound)*	6.50	173
11.	Candy Shop *(Grayhound)*	6.00	263
12.	Jumbo Crane *(Grayhound)*	6.00	276

CHILD-SIZE GAMES

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1.	Smart Toss Em *(Smart)*	7.67	221
2.	Shoot To Win! Jr. *(Smart)*	7.38	353
3.	Hightops *(Skee-Ball)*	6.67	53
4.	Super Mario Mushroom *(Premier)*	6.67	58
5.	1/2 Pint Frenzy *(ICE)*	6.40	263
6.	Bozo Basketball *(Design Plus)*	6.25	31
7.	Feed Big Bertha *(Smart)*	6.25	174
8.	Barnyard Babies *(Skee-Ball)*	6.00	14
9.	Froggy Jr. *(CCI)*	6.00	21
10.	Awesome Toss 'Em *(Acclaim/Lazer-Tron)*	5.43	57
11.	Toss Em *(UETD)*	5.33	51
12.	Kiddie Whac-A-Mole *(Bob's Space)*	5.00	16

ROLL DOWNS

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1.	Rollin' for Riches *(Acclaim/Lazer-Tron)*	8.00	80
2.	Spin To Win *(Acclaim/Lazer-Tron)*	7.50	326
3.	Spin-a-21 *(Acclaim/Lazer-Tron)*	6.50	28
4.	Quackers *(Seidel)*	6.20	30
5.	Clown Roll Down *(Bay Tek)*	5.50	137
6.	Rock N Roll *(Bay Tek)*	5.00	15

NOVELTY

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1.	Cyclone *(ICE)*	9.06	579
2.	Round 'n Round *(Phoenix)*	8.67	152
3.	Colorama *(Bromley)*	8.33	408
4.	Dinoscore *(Planet Earth)*	7.67	495
5.	Robo-Bop *(Coastal)*	7.60	247
6.	Cyclone Jr. *(ICE)*	7.50	163
7.	Dino Rally *(Bromley)*	7.50	199
8.	Dinoworld *(Planet Earth)*	7.33	380
9.	Ticket Tac Toe *(Fun House)*	7.00	20
10.	Flip N Win *(Planet Earth)*	6.50	202
11.	Pop-A-Ball *(Coastal)*	6.13	45
12.	Hop-A-Tic-Tac-Toe *(Data East)*	6.10	22
13.	Wheelin-N-Dealin *(Acclaim/Lazer-Tron)*	6.00	59
14.	Pop-A-Tac-Toe *(Coastal)*	5.60	46
15.	Solar Spin *(Acclaim/Lazer-Tron)*	5.50	44
16.	Hungry Hungry Hippos *(ICE)*	5.38	12
17.	Pop-A-Slot *(Coastal)*	5.33	209
18.	Simple Simon *(Am. Sammy)*	5.33	75
19.	Cosmo Gang *(Data East)*	5.25	*
20.	Belly Bomber *(Namco)*	5.00	*

COIN DROP GAMES

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1.	Goin' Rollin' *(Seidel)*	9.00	233
2.	Wheel 'M In *(Bromley)*	8.10	483
3.	Sega Sports *(Sega)*	8.00	51
4.	Smokin' Token *(Seidel)*	7.75	458
5.	Pirate's Gold *(Acclaim/Lazer-Tron)*	7.67	143
6.	Roll For Gold *(Benchmark)*	7.67	157
7.	Wheel of Fortune *(Fun House)*	7.50	143
8.	Cut the Cheese *(Sega)*	7.40	119
9.	Home Run Hitter *(CCI)*	7.00	354
10.	Aftershock *(Acclaim/Lazer-Tron)*	6.88	332
11.	Chicken Dash *(Konami)*	6.75	118
12.	Coin Circus *(Am. Sammy)*	6.67	94
13.	Rock-N-Bowl *(Bromley)*	6.64	217
14.	Super Rock-N-Bowl *(Bromley)*	6.50	103

GUN GAMES

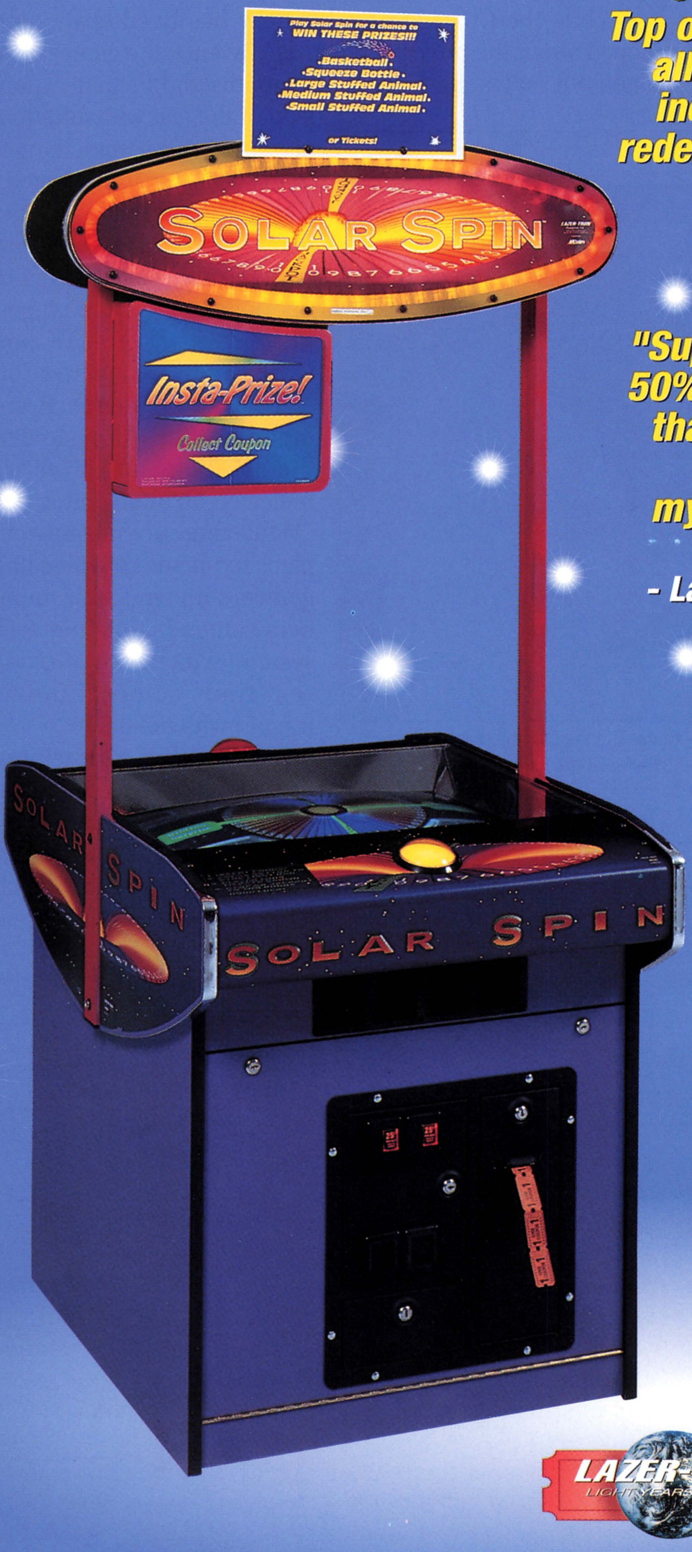
	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1.	Water Game *(Bob's Space)*	9.00	58
2.	Critter *(Exidy)*	6.50	7
3.	Big Mouth *(Meltec)*	6.43	40
4.	Ghosthunter *(Hanaho Games)*	6.00	35
5.	Miner's Revenge *(Acclaim/Lazer-Tron)*	6.00	35
6.	Knock-Down *(Meltec)*	5.67	11

BOPPING/STOMPING GAMES

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1.	Swamp Stomp *(Acclaim/Lazer-Tron)*	8.00	310
2.	Ribbit Racin *(Acclaim/Lazer-Tron)*	7.75	406
3.	Circus Hi-Rise *(Skee-Ball)*	6.50	107
4.	Spider Stompin *(Jaleco)*	6.40	308
5.	Wacky Gator *(Data East)*	6.06	106
6.	Rescue the Guppy *(Data East)*	6.00	*
7.	Spider Splattin' *(Island/Jaleco)*	6.00	12

Results are based on monthly Equipment Poll ballot returns. Point Value = average of ballot ratings on a scale of 1-10; Longevity Points = standings on Best 60 combined game lists (#1 game receives 60 points, #2 game receives 59 points, etc.) *_Indicates new or reappearing games._

Introducing
SUPER SOLAR SPIN
from LAZER-TRON



"Super Solar Spin has been awesome! Top of the charts! The instant prize feature allows the most unique opportunity to increase customer satisfaction with a redemption game, from anything I've seen in my 18 years in the business!"

- Greg Borman, GM
-F.E.C. in Northern CA

"Super Solar has increased revenue over 50% from the original unit. It is different than normal redemption. It allows me awesome new ways to promote my business. I highly recommend it!"

- Ken Cummins, Owner
- Large Pizza and Games, F.E.C., Northern CA

Solar Spin is Lazer-Tron's #1 rated skill stop video redemption game. Super Solar Spin, with the added bonus of the Insta-Prize Printer, earns significantly more money than Solar Spin.

The Instant Win Prize Feature allows operators to program machine so players can in one game win prizes such as gift certificates, stuffed animals or even a bike!

At one test location in N. California, after converting to a Super Solar Spin, the earnings jumped from an average of 5,500 plays per week to more than 10,000! This is an increase of almost 100%.

SUPER SOLAR SPIN FEATURES:

- Insta-Prize Printer (optional)
- Highly reliable
- Built-in progressive jackpot
- No moving parts
- Fully operator programmable

Weight: 320 lbs.
Size: 38"L x 27.5"W x 70"T
U.L., C.E., and F.C.C. approved

LAZER-TRON™
LIGHT YEARS AHEAD!

Acclaim®
coin-operated entertainment, inc.

SERIOUS COIN!

For more information contact: Acclaim Coin-Operated Entertainment/Lazer-Tron, 4430 Willow Road, Pleasanton, CA 94588 • Phone: (510) 460-0873 • Fax: (510) 460-0365
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Williams Wavenet test draws player interest

Game players in the Chicago area have been given a peek into the future, and what they have seen is real-time head-to-head competition on eight Williams Bally/Midway *Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3* machines placed in eight different locations.

"It's real-time play; there's no perceived delay," said Clayton Perry of Diversions Fun and Games in Chicago, one of the test locations. "It's head-to-head ongoing competition. There's no tournament yet but I understand they want to do some tournaments in the future."

With the ongoing competition format in place a number of the test locations said the game is attracting the best players, and Perry said pricing had to be adjusted so that after 10 consecutive wins a two-token buy in feature is activated. The game is set at three tokens or 75 cents for initial play in most of the eight locations.

"When you play it feels like you're playing somebody on the same game," said Doug Lemons of Great Odyssey in Carol Stream, Ill., another test location. "It seems like it really draws the elite players. Average players are just going to get beat."

While the Chicago-based factory has been fairly tight lipped about the project, known as Wavenet, the games have been out on test for close to six months and further expansion of the test with additional games and some changes to the network are expected. The network that links the games allows a scoreboard with the top players listed to be updated as it changes. Players sign onto the network and are paired off against an opponent at another location. The name of that location and player are indicated on the monitor.

While there are no apparent plans to pursue downloading games, some industry members contend that a network system which can provide real-time competition is fraught with possibility.

Unlike other tournament systems which collect data after a certain interval of time, such a system allows communication with each machine on an ongoing basis. The test system is even equipped with a network news function which can deliver pertinent information to players and could open itself up to advertising functions.

"Real-time play is what is going to knock tournament systems off," said Perry. "It's what the customer wants."

Eight *Ultimate MK3* games are being used in the Chicago area to test a networked system which allows real-time competition.

October marks first raise in minimum wage

This month marks the first increase in the minimum wage, which will rise from $4.25 to $4.75 per hour with a second increase to $5.15 coming next September, and industry members predict the move will have a negative impact on business.

Hardest hit will be facilities with younger student employees, such as FECs and amusement parks, which traditionally hire more minimum wage, part-time staff. One FEC owner contacted said that while he will not cut his staff as a result, the cost will ultimately be passed along to customers.

AMOA government relations committee chairman Gene Winstead said traditional coin-op game operators should not be seriously affected. "Ours have traditionally been full-time jobs but since we are so closely related to the hospitality industry it will impact us to some extent," he said.

Carole Sjolander, executive director of IFECA, said it was an issue that will be looked at to determine its impact on members, and IAAPA reminded its membership that at least one exemption had been saved.

"IAAPA members need to remember that seasonal amusement facilities are exempt from the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act," IAAPA government relations publication *The Capitol Carousel* reminded its readers. "States may also have their own minimum wage laws...States that have such laws set a higher minimum than the federal government's rate and generally do not provide a seasonal exemption."

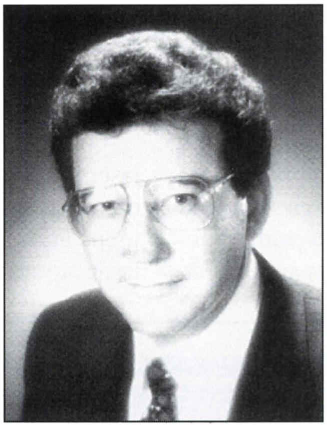
Cigarette vending rules questioned by operators

While cigarette vending survived an attempted outright ban by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the agency's newly issued restrictions are too severe and based on inaccurate information, according to several key AMOA members.

However, the issue may not be a lost cause with operators looking to Congress for a possible solution.

"We were dealt a better scenario but it's still not ideal," said Mark Levine of Melo-Tone Vending in Somerville, Mass. "Bars and restaurants that children can have access to are restricted. It will affect a great number of machines because it's a very slim definition of where machines can be placed."

That restriction, according AMOA tobacco committee chairman Terry Davis of TD Rowe Corp. in Houston, was based on outdated statistics regarding the use of vending machines by minors. In its proposal, the FDA cited a 1994 Surgeon General's report that claimed "vending machines are most popular with the youngest smokers, with 22 percent of 13-year-olds who smoke purchasing cigarettes from vending machines compared with two percent of 17-year-olds."


Terry Davis

In a letter to FDA Commissioner David Kessler, Davis cited a more recent Center for Disease Control (CDC) report released this year that said only 2.2 percent of all teenagers buy cigarettes from vending machines.

Davis cited the newer study as reflecting the "tremendous strides made locally by government and vending companies over the last few years. Together we have successfully reduced the number of cigarette vending machines from 800,000 in 1985 to approximately 400,000 today.

"Generally this reduction was achieved through removing machines from unacceptable locations. Furthermore, with the installation of lock-out devices on machines in non age-restricted locations, 91 percent of cigarette vending machines owned and operated by members of AMOA are age-restricted. Our goal is to have this at 100 percent within one year."

In concluding his letter to Kessler, Davis wrote: "Given the tremendous media play and volumes of data filed with the FDA, the inaccuracies contained in the agency's final report can only be labeled as political grandstanding with no empirical support. What a shame that a government agency would act to hurt American businesses and put people out of business for political gain."

But the fight may not be over, Davis said. There is a move afoot on Capitol Hill to take the whole issue of tobacco out of FDA hands, and Davis said operators are encouraged to contact their Congressional representatives.

"The FDA had to support the president but we're really taking issue with this," Davis said. "It's all going to end up in Congress."

Despite problems with the new regulations, AMOA government relations committee chairman Gene Winstead said they should be taken seriously because the FDA will review them two years after they take effect next August.

"At first blush it looks like the FDA listened to some of the concerns of our industry," Winstead said. "I hope the industry will heed this."

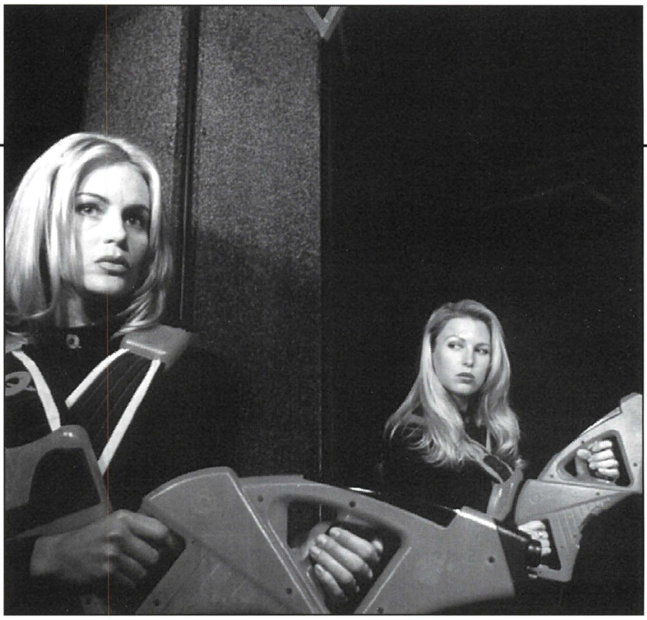
NAMA report shows improved vending sales and profits

The vending industry showed modest increases in 1995 in both sales and profits, according to a study released by the National Automatic Merchandising Association. The 1996 NAMA Operating Ratio Report showed a 3.4 percent gain in total sales volume over last year among companies who participated in both year's surveys.

These same companies delivered an operating profit of 4.4 percent, up from 4.2 percent. In contrast, the report showed that an aggregate of all companies who answered the survey, whether or not they also participated the previous year, experienced somewhat lower results with operating profits of 3.8 percent compared to 3.9 percent in the prior year.

The report also highlights the ability of high-performing companies, those in the top 25 percent of profitability, to generate better gross margins and lower personnel costs than the industry average. This was true for the average of all participating companies, particularly those repeat participants. The survey was provided free to all those companies that participated. Members may order the survey for $100, while the cost for non-members is $250. To order a copy, call NAMA, (312)346-0370.

Q-Zar predicts growth in laser tag market



Q-Zar is predicting significant growth in the laser tag market in 1997.

Next year should see revenue doubling for laser tag manufacturer Q-Zar, the company predicts. Providing impetus for this expansion is worldwide growth in the number of FEC operators and developers.

Q-Zar also noted in its most recent financial report that while equipment sales continue to grow, the bulk of new business comes from direct retail operations. Top level management predicts that in 1997 more than half of the company's revenue will be generated by such operations.

Much of this expected growth will come from Asia, and development of this market continues to be a primary focus for Q-Zar. In excess of eight new markets are expected to open their first centers before the end of the year.

Q-Zar is currently marketing several new concepts in laser tag including Q-Kidz primarily developed for the under-12 market, Q-City which is a Dallas-based center for teens and the whole family, and its new state-of-the-art laser tag system iQ.

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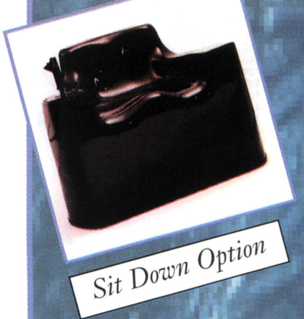
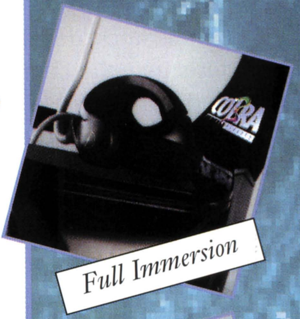
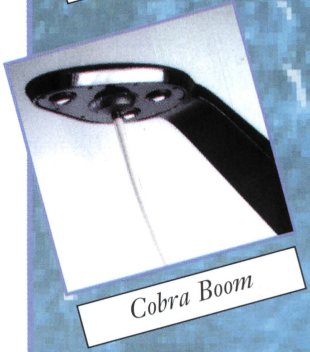
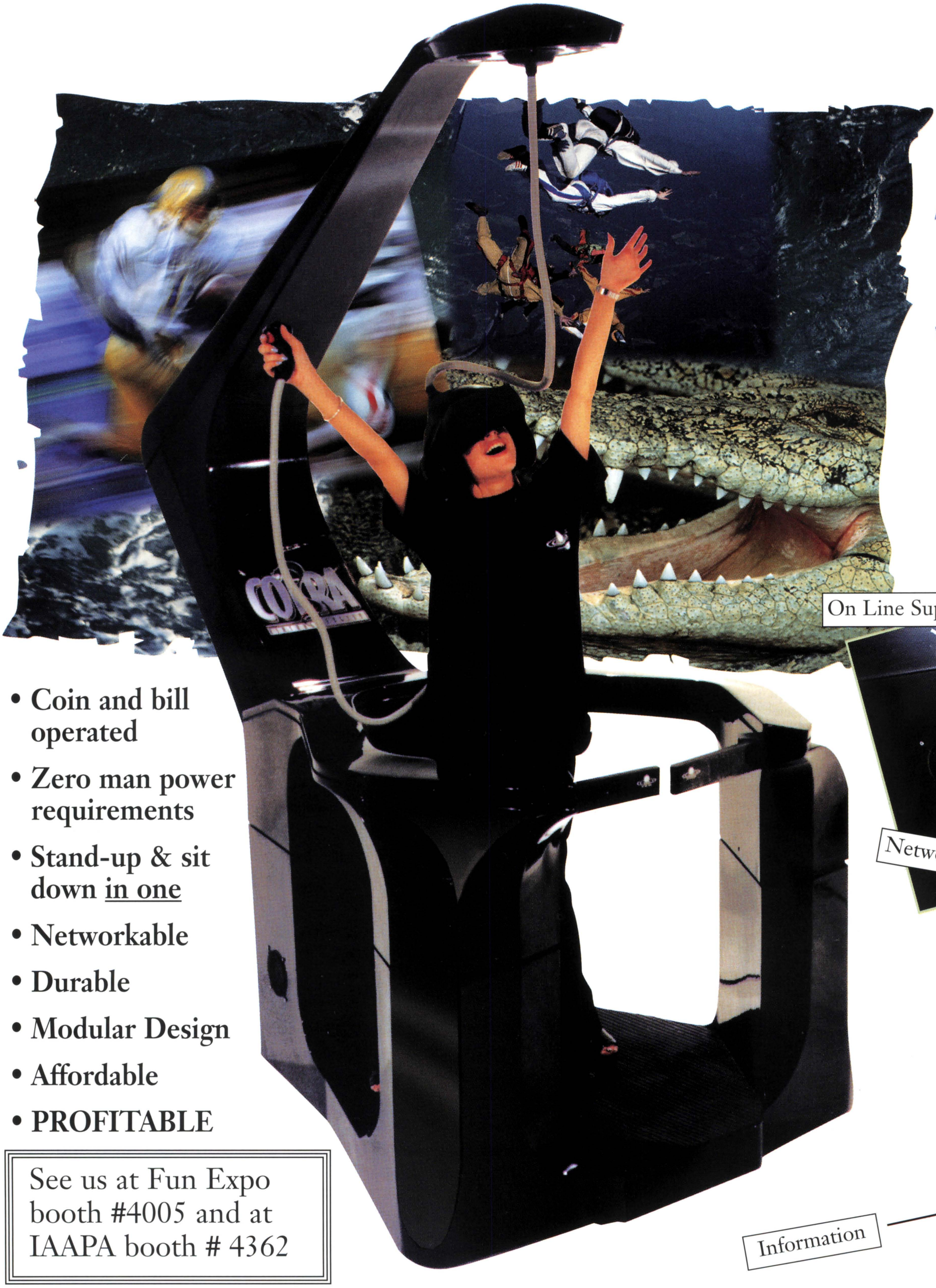
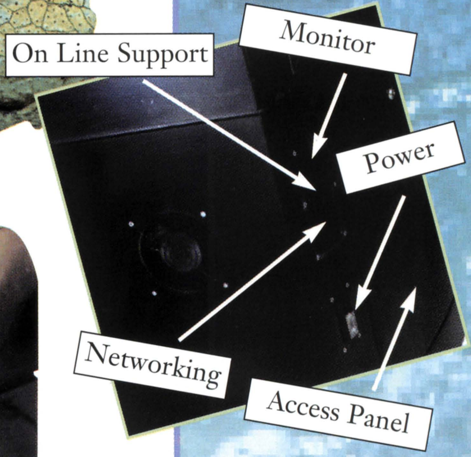

Sit Down Option


Full Immersion



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Voodoo Graphics making magic for game development

In the latest developments at software tool supplier 3Dfx Interactive, the company has announced agreements with several firms to use its Voodoo Graphics accelerator to enhance new PC market products and game titles.

The first of these announcements involves a deal to bring the next generation of interactive 3-D graphics to the new HP Pavilion family of real-life imaging PCs in the United States. Under the agreement, Voodoo Graphics will be the 3-D graphics engine utilized for one of the new consumer PCs, bringing arcade technology to the home market.

"For game enthusiasts, the new HP Pavilion PC with 3Dfx technology delivers unsurpassed graphics capabilities in today's PC market," said Harry "Webb" McKinney, general manager of HP's home products division.

Voodoo Graphics will also be utilized by Microsoft Corp. with its fall release of *Hellbender*, the first in a series of Microsoft Direct3D games developed on 3Dfx's accelerator. The atmospheric effects in *Hellbender* include a super realistic fog effect setting the stage for intense shooting action game play.

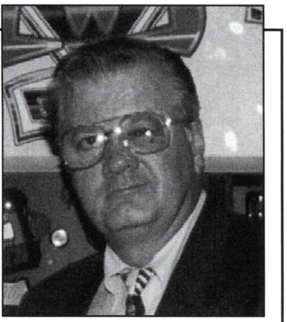
3Dfx and Argonaut Software have also announced the availability of BRender drivers for Voodoo Graphics which will provide game developers with a high performance platform that delivers up to 340 percent of the performance of software-only rendering. DOS and Windows 95 drivers that incorporate BRender were made available last month.

For more information, contact 3Dfx Interactive, (415)934-2400; fax (415)934-2424.

New arrivals

Gary Warner of Coin Concepts and his wife Lisa are once again proud parents. Joshua Steven was born on July 29, topping the scales at nine pounds, one ounce and 21-3/4 inches long. Sister Jessica is just shy of three years old. In addition to Joshua Steven, the Coin Concepts family has another new arrival, *Volcano*, an island themed game which challenges players to negotiate their ball through the tropical setting for the big ticket payoff. Look for more in next month's "What's New."

FAMA meets to discuss issues, elect officer



Don Tunstall of BWB-Newark has been elected president of the Florida Amusement Machine Association.

Members of the Florida Amusement Machine Association met over the summer to discuss pressing tax issues as well as elect a new slate of officers.

Association members also tackled the sticky issue of how to combat misinformation being given to various taxing authorities in the state.

FAMA officers for the coming year are Don Tunstall of BWB-Newark (president), Bill Halperin of Florida Music Co. (first vice president), Joel Ford of Federal Vending Inc. (second vice president and secretary/treasurer), and Dale Williams of Williams Amusements (immediate past president).

H. Betti Industries honored by Tomorrow's Children's Fund

H. Betti Industries in Carlstadt, N.J., will be honored early next month as the Corporate Organization and Humanitarians of the year by the Tomorrow's Children's Fund.

The company, which is the first corporate sponsor to be honored by the group, is one of the world's largest distributors of amusement equipment. Its divisions include Betson Enterprises, Fun Merchants, and Betson/Imperial Export.

Tomorrow's Children's Fund is a non-profit organization that provides medical, financial, and emotional support to children afflicted with cancer and other potentially life-threatening diseases. Affiliated with Hackensack Hospital, the fund has been active since 1982.

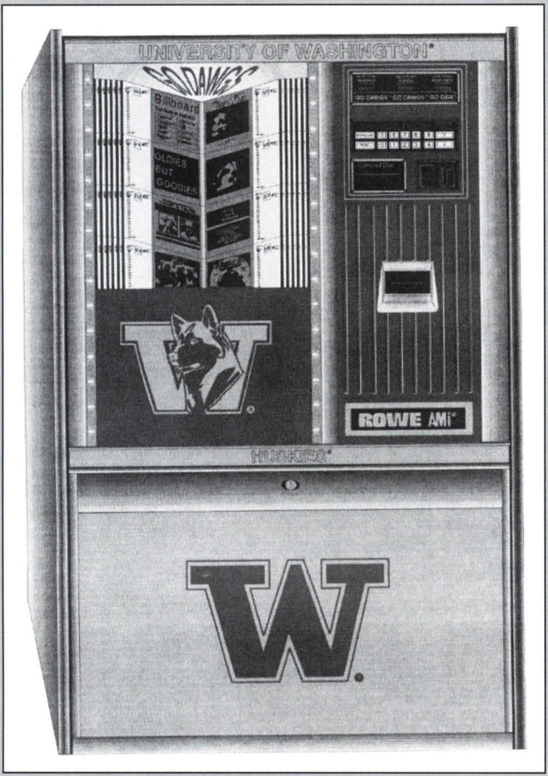
Official recognition will take place during a formal dinner to be held on Nov. 2 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in New York City. At press time, tickets were still available. All proceeds will be donated to Tomorrow's Children's Fund.

H. Betti earned the honor by being a strong supporter of the Tomorrow's Children's Fund since 1989. Bert Betti named the organization as the beneficiary of proceeds from AAMCF in 1989 when he was honored as Man of the Year.

Most notable in this recent honor is their organization and implementation of an annual golf tournament and dinner. The 1996 event was held at the Forest Hills Field Club in Bloomfield, N.J., on Sept. 9. Over $35,000 was raised and donated to the fund.

Management and staff at H. Betti invite other members of the industry to contribute to Tomorrow's Children's Fund. Tickets for the awards dinner can be purchased by calling Jennifer Short, (201)438-1300, ext. 311. Donations can be sent to Tomorrow's Children's Fund, 30 Prospect Ave., Hackensack, NJ 07601.

More Rowe theme boxes on the way



Rowe's University of Washington Theme Box

Rowe/AMi will be releasing three new University Logo *MM-2* Theme Boxes as a result of its completed test marketing. The new jukeboxes will include University of Illinois, University of Wisconsin, and Michigan State University.

Currently in limited production are theme boxes for University of Iowa, University of Michigan, University of Washington, Ohio State University, and Penn State University.

"The response from players and operators to the University Theme Boxes was stronger than we imagined it would be," said Rowe executive vice president Joel Friedman. "We are considering additional universities and colleges if the market so demands. It is a long, expensive, and tedious process to license each individual university. Included in the price are all royalty payments required by the universities for the use of the logos."

According to Friedman, the jukeboxes also met with positive response at the Salex Exposition in Sao Paulo, Brazil. "It was amazing to see how the international marketplace responds to American university identification," he observed.

Sega introduces two new simulators

Sega GameWorks has announced the fall release of two new coin-op simulators. They are *Touring Car*, which aims to replicate the pulse-pounding feel of a touring car road race, and the jet ski experience of *WaveRunner.*

Touring Car pits players against one another and has a multiplayer mode that supports up to eight racers simultaneously on four linkable units.

To capture the sounds of each vehicle, Sega's technicians installed special 3-D speakers in the headrest of the driver's seat and a 3-D woofer under the seat. Game action is further powered by the hip dance music of popular Japananese recording artist Avex Trax.

Sega's *WaveRunner* is the result of a partnership agreement with Yamaha, a leading motor sports manufacturer. Utilizing Sega's Model 2 CG Board, the game delivers realistic on-screen action.

WaveRunner is designed with an actual Yamaha jet ski built into a hydraulic cabinet that produces realistic bumping, rolling, and pitching movements. This allows the game to reproduce the unique handling of the real thing.

Players can compete against other players on connecting units or the computer, and up to four units can be linked together.

Virtual Images stages Cyberpod event tour

Virtual Images Inc. of Dublin, Ohio, is currently presenting its newly redesigned virtual reality system, named the Cyberpod, on a fall event tour that is traveling across the country.

Stops will include Federated department stores in Georgia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania; a three-week stay at the Grout Museum in Waterloo, Iowa; and an appearance at the University of Pittsburgh.

"Events have always been a large part of our overall business strategy to generate revenues, new business, and showcase our products," said company president Bryan Eisenhart. "Virtual Images is looking forward to the outstanding fall event schedule to complement its sales efforts."

The company, which recently developed the high-end Cyberpak system, is also involved in corporate events for The Limited stores and Sterling Commerce. Virtual Images will be showing its product at both the Fun Expo this month in Las Vegas and at the IAAPA show next month in New Orleans.

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Plethora of parts

Our technical expert Randy Fromm provided readers with a round up of parts suppliers last month, and it later came to his attention that Tullytown, Pa., -based Competitive Products Corp. slipped through his lasso. The company is in its eighth year and going strong. Pictured here are the principle players at Competitive, (l-r): Mike Paziora, Bill Ray Sr., Ginger Ray, and Bill Ray Jr. Look for an in-depth profile of Competitive in Play Meter in the coming months. You can reach them at (215)547-7520.

AIE set for this month

The second annual Amusement Industry Expo designed to be a showmen's showplace is just around the corner, and organizers report that exhibit sales are booming. The trade show, which is being held Oct. 29-30 at the I-X Center in Cleveland, has already doubled in size and more sales are expected by show time.

Close to 100 exhibitors have signed up to display their wares on the 114,000-square-foot show floor. In fact, the opportunity to show rides and attractions indoors has reportedly been a significant selling point.

"I know of no other facility in the entire country that you can possibly do this in," said Dick Chance of Chance Rides Inc. "This is just a great opportunity for the whole industry."

Chance Rides along with Otterbacher Mfg. will sponsor the OABA Opening Night Cocktail Reception; Wisdom Industries is sponsoring a similar event during the show, the AIMS Cocktail Reception.

The show floor will feature exhibitors from all areas of the amusement business including rides, concessions, trailers, bunk houses, fun houses, midway and arcade games, lighting and electrical, canvas and tents, plush and novelties, and food and beverage preparation.

Areas new to the show include used equipment, ticket printing, communications/security equipment, animated robots, commercial strollers and wagons, and coin-op nickelodeons.

AIE is sponsored by AIMS Intl. and supported by OABA and NICA. For more information, call (216)265-2619 or (800)897-3942.

Open House update

☛ **Brady (NC): Oct. 4- Brady (Orlando): Oct. 5.**

☛ **Betson Enterprises: Oct. 5-Betson Philadelphia, 1 p.m.-6 p.m.; Oct. 9-Betson New Jersey, 1 p.m.-7 p.m.; Oct. 12-Pittsburgh, Pa., 10 a.m.-2 p.m.; Oct. 16-Norwood, Mass., 1 p.m.-6 p.m.; Oct. 20-Syracuse, N.Y., Noon-5 p.m.**

☛ **Mondial Distributing: Oct. 9-Springfield, N.J.; Oct. 12-Bensalem, Pa.; Oct. 16-Norwood, Mass. All are scheduled for the afternoon.**

☛ **Music-Vend: Oct. 9-Seattle, Wash., 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; Oct. 18-Dunis, Wash., 4 p.m.-8 p.m.; Oct. 25-Spokane, Wash., Noon-5 p.m.**

☛ **Mountain Coin Distributing: Oct. 16-Albuquerque, N.M.; Oct. 18-Denver, Colo.; Oct. 22 Phoenix, Ariz.; Oct. 25-Las Vegas, Nev.; Oct. 29-Salt Lake City, Utah. All are set for 11 a.m.-5 p.m.**

☛ **Colorado Game & Vending Exchange: Oct. 18-Denver, Colo., 11 a.m.-4 p.m.**

☛ **Struve Distributing: Oct. 25-Salt Lake City, Utah, Noon-5 p.m.**

Thomson adds classics to its ride library

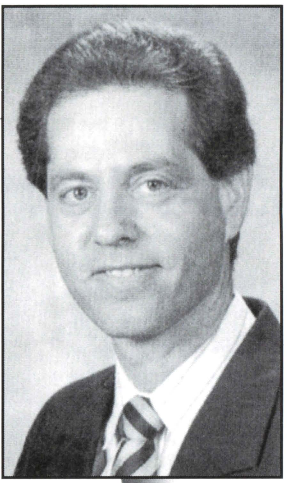
Three computer-generated classics will headline new simulation software being introduced by Thomson Entertainment next month at IAAPA '96 in New Orleans.

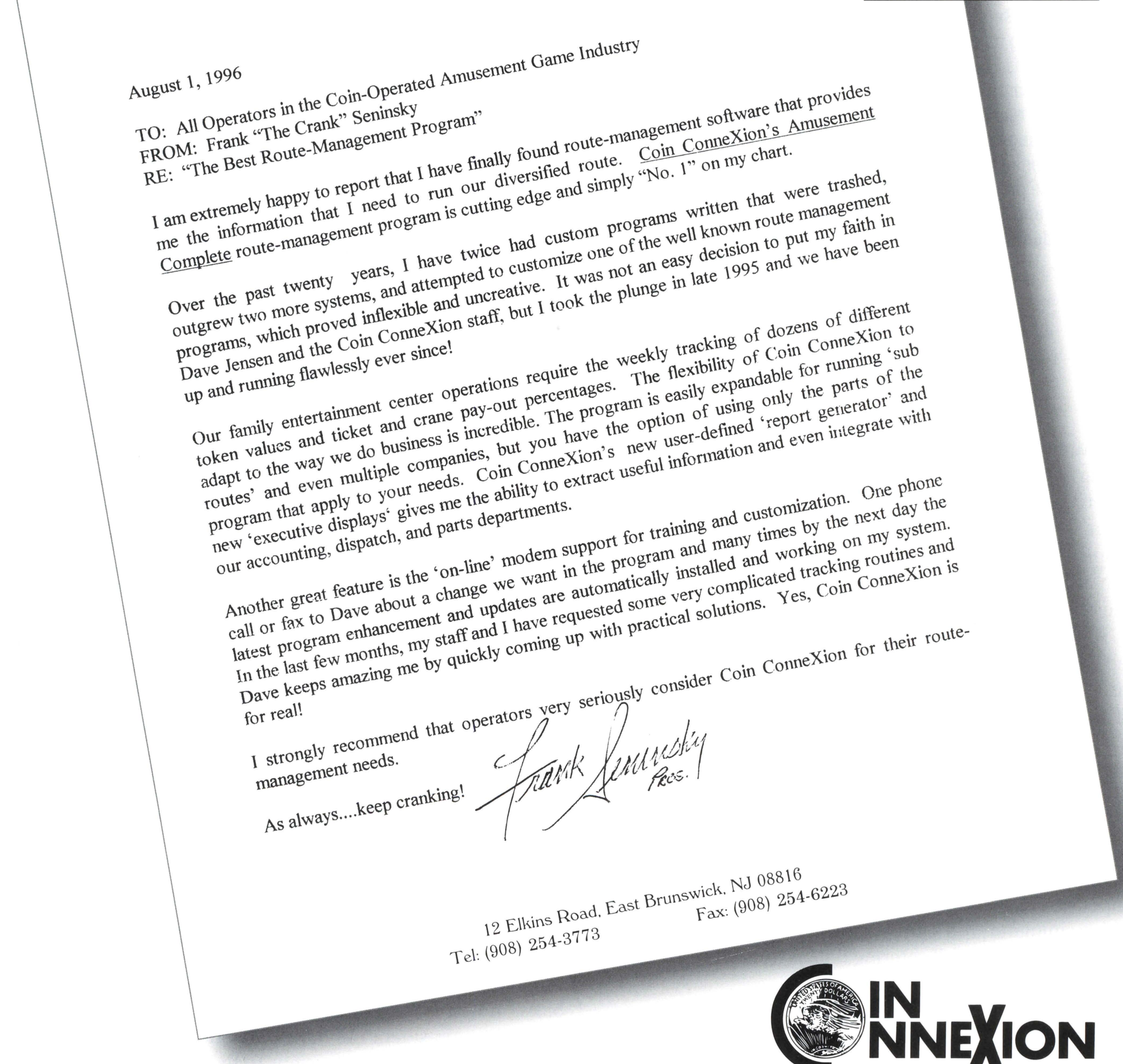
The first two titles are the Thomson exclusive RGB Adventure, a multicolored extravaganza in which riders are thrust into a mission to prevent inter-galactic thieves from siphoning off the world's primary colors, and Silicon Adventure, which is a journey into one of the most advanced silicon chips that was originally developed for the Korean manufacturer of the chip. Both rides were created by New Wave Intl., the maker of the current hit Astro Canyon Coaster.

The third title is Brain Rangers, made by CAMF Productions of Austria, a company with many years experience in medical imaging. The ride is part education but total entertainment as participants venture into the inner core of the human brain to fight off an invading virus.

"The new rides represent part of a continuing commitment to build the ride library and keep our customers' attractions fresh," said sales and marketing director Chris Chaddock. "We are also working on several new live action rides including one where riders will literally skim across water in a high-speed jet ski chase."

FRANK "THE CRANK" SENINSKY SPEAKS OUT ON THE BEST ROUTE-MANAGEMENT PROGRAM!





Alpha-Omega Amusements, Inc.

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August 1, 1996

TO: All Operators in the Coin-Operated Amusement Game Industry
FROM: Frank "The Crank" Seninsky
RE: "The Best Route-Management Program"

I am extremely happy to report that I have finally found route-management software that provides me the information that I need to run our diversified route. Coin ConneXion's Amusement Complete route-management program is cutting edge and simply "No. 1" on my chart.

Over the past twenty years, I have twice had custom programs written that were trashed, outgrew two more systems, and attempted to customize one of the well known route management programs, which proved inflexible and uncreative. It was not an easy decision to put my faith in Dave Jensen and the Coin ConneXion staff, but I took the plunge in late 1995 and we have been up and running flawlessly ever since!

Our family entertainment center operations require the weekly tracking of dozens of different token values and ticket and crane pay-out percentages. The flexibility of Coin ConneXion to adapt to the way we do business is incredible. The program is easily expandable for running 'sub routes' and even multiple companies, but you have the option of using only the parts of the program that apply to your needs. Coin ConneXion's new user-defined 'report generator' and new 'executive displays' gives me the ability to extract useful information and even integrate with our accounting, dispatch, and parts departments.

Another great feature is the 'on-line' modem support for training and customization. One phone call or fax to Dave about a change we want in the program and many times by the next day the latest program enhancement and updates are automatically installed and working on my system. In the last few months, my staff and I have requested some very complicated tracking routines and Dave keeps amazing me by quickly coming up with practical solutions. Yes, Coin ConneXion is for real!

I strongly recommend that operators very seriously consider Coin ConneXion for their route-management needs.

As always....keep cranking!

Frank Seninsky
Pres.

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Leisure Complexes opens 60-acre New York location

Right: The 170,000-square-foot Sports Plus complex will include as many as 300 games provided by Alpha-Omega.

Below right: Working together at Sports Plus, (l-r): Leisure Complexes vice president Mark Calace, Alpha-Omega president Frank Seninsky, Sports Plus vice president Bill Parks, and Sports Plus president Bill Reitzig.

Sports Plus
THE ULTIMATE ENTERTAINMENT EXPERIENCE!

Leisure Complexes, veteran owner of a regional chain of bowling centers, has opened what it calls the largest indoor amusement facility east of Las Vegas. Sports Plus is a $38 million, 60-acre complex located in Lake Grove, N.Y.

Alpha-Omega Amusements & Sales of New Brunswick, N.J., has been retained by Sports Plus as its consultant and game operator. Working with the Sports Plus project architect, Alpha Omega president Frank Seninsky assisted in the selection, purchase, and layout for all major rides and attractions.

The multiattraction complex inaugurated its first phase this summer, and the entire project is scheduled to be completed by year's end. Key components will include an 18-hole executive par three and four golf course, an NHL regulation ice rink, 48-lane bowling center, upscale restaurant and sports bar, indoor Ferris wheel, 36-seat Iwerks motion theater, soft modular play maze, mini Himalaya family ride, bumper cars, LaserTron laser tag arena, Power Alley VR pitching simulator, Kid's Town and stage show, Tiny Tots edutainment center, full catering hall, pro shop, and corporate events center.

"It's one of the most awesome projects I've ever been associated with," said Seninsky. "Although I knew what to expect from helping work with blueprints, my first visit to Sports Plus blew me away.

"Attractions are offered at value pricing to create profound customer satisfaction and build solid repeat business," he added. "From now on, all other indoor location-based entertainment centers will be measured against Sports Plus."

Alpha-Omega provided 225 amusement machines for Sports Plus as well as installation, setup, ongoing service, and monthly infusions of new equipment. As many as 300 machines are planned for eventual installation.

"Frank's staff is here on a daily basis," noted Sports Plus president Bill Reitzig. "Under our agreement, Alpha-Omega supplies technicians to fix problems as they occur, fine tune the machines, assist with the moving and layout of games, and supply fresh games each and every month. We've established an ongoing relationship with Alpha-Omega to maximize both of our incomes."

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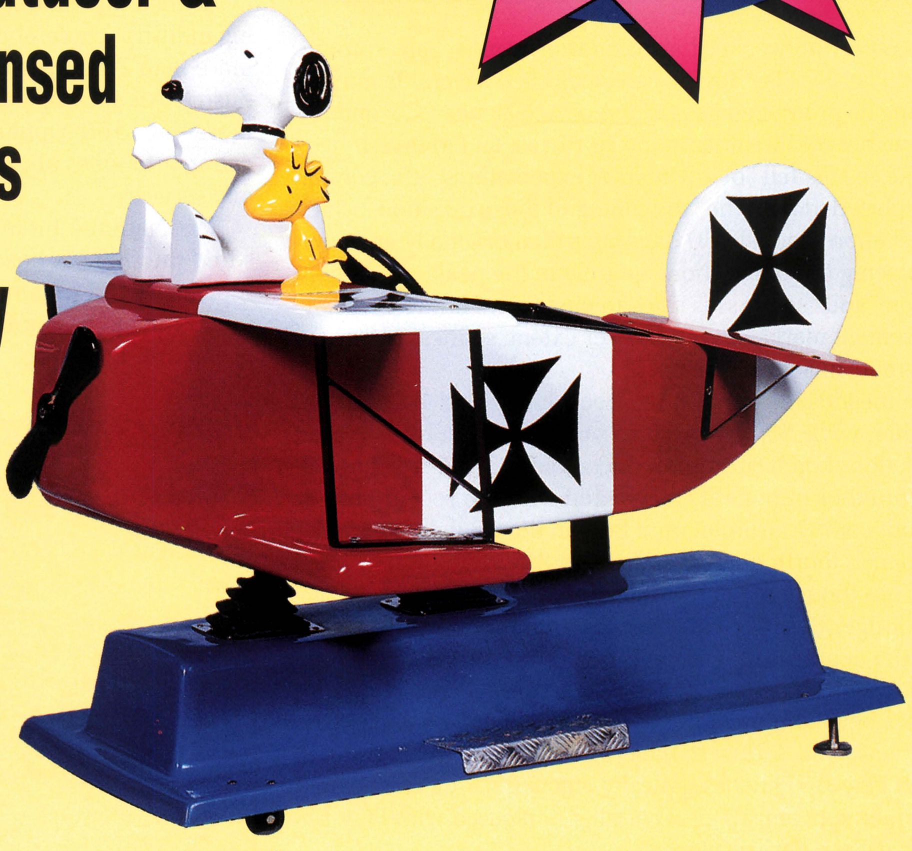

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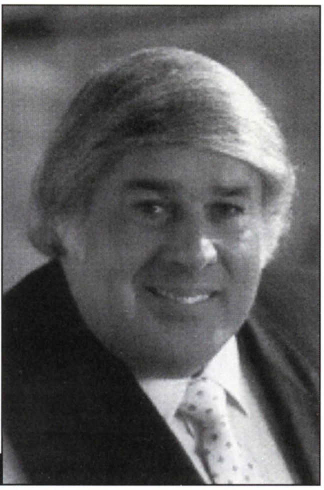
Ace acquisition and weather cited in Play-By-Play results



Arturo Torres

In reporting weaker fourth quarter results, San Antonio-based Play-By-Play Toys & Novelties cited several factors including its protracted acquisition of Ace Novelty Co. and unseasonably cold weather in the Northeast and Midwest.

The results fell “below market expectations,” the company reported, due to the “the timing of the acquisition...which closed approximately 60 days later than originally anticipated, placing the transaction squarely in the peak amusement season” and “softness is sales to customers in the domestic amusement market and to a lesser extent, softness in sales to customers in South America.”

Domestic sales may have been hampered by the cold weather, while South American sales were hurt by increased regulations and tariffs on products sold in Brazil. Additionally, a number of benefits associated with the recent merger will not come to fruition until later in the calendar year. The company’s fourth quarter ended July 31.

“Even though the consummation of the acquisition of Ace took longer than anticipated, we continue to firmly believe that the acquisition will yield favorable results in the long term,” said chairman and CEO Arturo Torres. “Circumstances beyond our control such as inclement weather in the Northeast and Midwest have affected sales in regions in which Play-By-Play has typically enjoyed strong amusement customer concentrations. Overall, I’m pleased with Play-By-Play’s year-to-date results.”

Added company president Mark Gawlak: “The delay in the closing of the Ace acquisition which ran into the peak amusement season forced the delay in our plans to integrate the two companies and also severely impacted the company’s ability to make sufficient purchase commitments to benefit from the demand for their licensed products. We believe the Ace acquisition will initially have a dilutive impact on earnings, but the long-term benefits should enhance earnings once the operations are successfully integrated.”

Indian group holds trade show in Denver

The National Indian Gaming Association held its 11th Annual Convention & Trade Show Aug. 25-29 at the Colorado Convention Center in Denver. The event boasted renowned speakers, newsmakers, and vital workshops, as well as other useful demonstration sessions.

This year’s theme, “We’ve Always Taken Chances,” illustrated how Indian nations have been risk takers in protecting tribal sovereignty and resources from the time of the buffalo hunts up through to the present.

As the only national event dedicated to the Indian gaming industry, conference organizers projected attendance of more than 2,500 professionals involved in the $5 billion industry. An accompanying trade show exhibition featured more than 350 suppliers and 50 workshops aimed at educating attendees about the latest developments, products, and services.

The National Indian Gaming Association, which sponsored the show, is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and represents 145 member tribes. The association’s mission is to protect and preserve the general welfare of tribes involved in gaming enterprises.

News Briefs

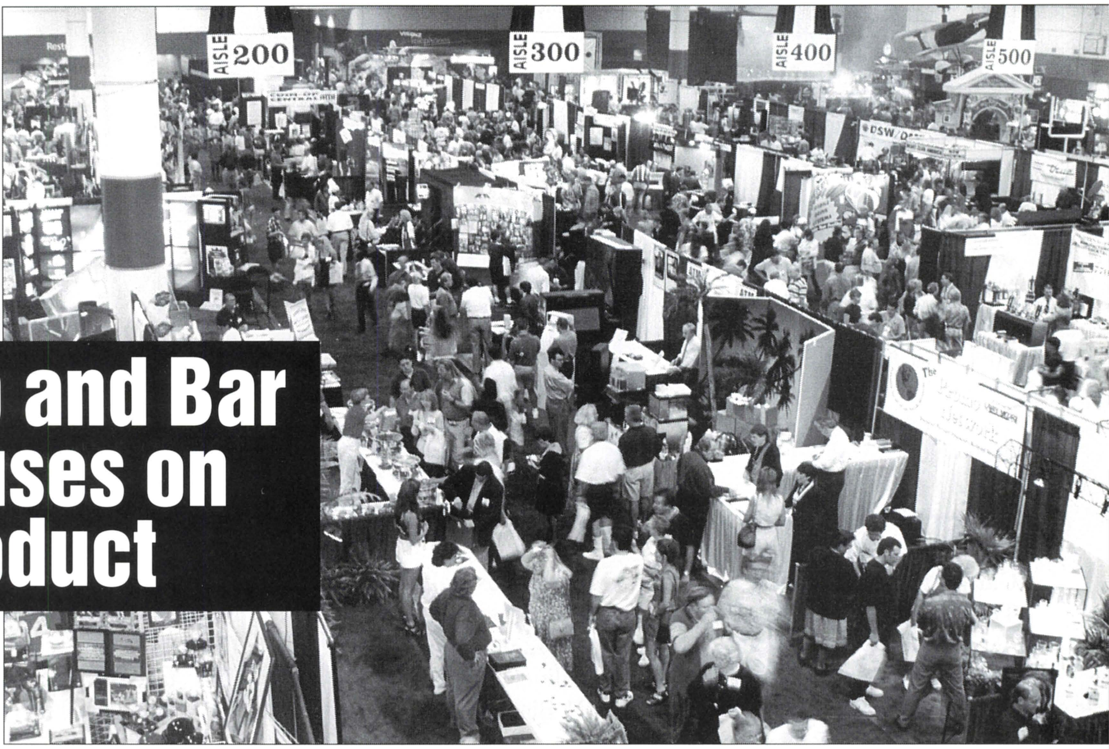
☛ The Nevada Gaming Commission has approved the sale and distribution of Williams *Platinum FX Series* casino games by WMS Industries’ subsidiary WMS Gaming in that state.

☛ The newly formed Billiard & Entertainment Products Expo will be held at the Tarrant County Convention Center in Ft. Worth, Texas, May 1-3, 1997. More than 200 companies will reportedly show both commercial and residential products.

☛ Bob Snyder of Bob Snyder & Associates was recently selected to provide a one-day seminar on laws, gambling, games, and amusement devices for the command leadership representing the Association of Women Peace Officers throughout California.

☛ Virtual reality and simulation software developer Paradigm Simulation will be providing Egghead Shred, an interactive experience for the Silicon Graphics Inc. exhibit at Epcot’s Innoventions.

Nightclub and Bar Expo focuses on profit, product



The 20th National Nightclub & Bar Exposition was hailed as a success with a plethora of new product and profit-making ideas.

The 20th National Nightclub & Bar Exposition at the Omni Rosen Hotel and Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla., played host to more than 350 exhibits aimed at promoting profits and innovative product for bar owners and managers.

"This show met and exceeded our expectations," said show organizer Ed Meek. "We succeeded in bringing the industry as a whole together, which was our original intent. However, the total number of both exhibitors and attendees participating was more than we could have hoped for."

In addition to the show floor activities, over 30 in-depth seminars, panels, and workshops targeting every aspect of the on-premise market were taught by leading industry experts and consultants.

Topics included coin-op technology, promotions, media buying and advertising strategies, bartending techniques, service tips, marketing, sports programming, supplier promotions, DJ promotions, and lighting and sound.

Of special note was the exhibition of Richardson, Texas,-based Immersive Technologies' new virtual reality system for street locations. Using cutting-edge technologies, the company developed its Kimera system to combine the cost-effectiveness of current deluxe arcade games with the innovative attraction of interactive virtual reality technology.

Immersive's stand alone system requires no attendant and features a one-year warranty, binocular Immerse-O-Scope display with 3-D sound, easily upgradeable software capability, and six degrees freedom of motion.

"Kimera is virtual reality for the masses," said Immersive CEO Robert Solomon, who predicts the system will be in full scale production this month.

AAMA to receive exporting award

The American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA) has been named as a recipient of the President's E Award for Exporting by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Established in 1961 by President John Kennedy, the award is designed to give recognition to persons, firms, or organizations which contribute significantly in the effort to increase exports.

According to AAMA executive director Bob Fay, the association's extensive efforts in foreign business development made it a prime candidate for the award.

Fay noted that AAMA has consistently helped members learn about export opportunities by providing them with customized market surveys conducted by the Commerce Department. Additionally, the group has produced trade missions to a number of international markets and followed up in several with trade shows to further acquaint that sector with American coin-op amusement products.

"We are very pleased that our ongoing programs, created to help members establish their product overseas, have been recognized in this way," Fay said. "It has always been one of our main goals to establish strong business relationships in a variety of international markets."

"Since the inception of the foreign business development program in 1991, the association has consistently expanded its work in this area," said AAMA president Rick Kirby of New England Coin-Op. "I believe that many people deserve credit for their contributions to these efforts, and I am pleased that they are being recognized through the honor of this prestigious award."

An award presentation is being planned for this month, and Secretary of Commerce Michael Kantor will travel to Chicago to attend.

COIN-OP
NEWS

Have You HEARD?

Williams Bally/Midway showed off its driving simulator sequel *Cruis'n World*, the much awaited sequel to *Cruis'n USA*, at AMOA '96 in Dallas. Up to four games can be linked together, and they will be available with either 25- or 32-inch monitors.

Kevin Sharp Enterprises debuted the long awaited Game Master multigame system at AMOA '96 as well. The Game Master system will provide five games on the base system with the ability to upgrade to 32 games. Base games will include Stars and Bars 8 line, Lucky Leprechaun 8 line, Ultra Poker, Lucky 21 Blackjack, Sharp Keno, and Rags to Riches pull tab.

U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), long a critic of violent video content, may propose some type of action addressing youth access to violent games in the near future. To order game content advisory stickers, call (800)AMOA-YES.

Dollar coin alert: While prospects for inclusion of the dollar coin bill in the final federal budget are dim, Rep. Jack Metcalf (R-Wash.) is reportedly planning to offer the bill as an amendment to any related bill in the House Banking Subcommittee.

Dave & Buster's plans to open a new location in the Washington, D.C., area in November. Other planned sites are Ontario, Calif. (Spring 1997), Rockland County, N.Y. (Summer 1997), and Denver, Colo. (Fall 1997).

Incoming calls to SunBelt Amusement and Vending Inc. will go to a new area code (972). Its (800) number remains the same. To contact the company, call (972)721-4600; fax (972)438-4820.

Coin-Op Classics: The Complete Coin-Op Collector Magazine has added a Web page to its editorial coverage of vintage and antique coin-op machines (http://www.coin-op-classics.com). For more information, call (714)968-3020; fax (714)963-1716.

Bally Gaming has also launched an interactive site on the World Wide Web, where customers and gaming enthusiasts can tap into a variety of information and customer service tools (www.ballygaming.com). Using Shockware software by Macromedia, the site features an animated slot machine.

Mazzco has moved to a new office three times larger than its former warehouse. The company's new address is 500 Eastern Ave., Bensenville, IL 60106; (800)292-4491 or (630)616-8200; fax (630)616-8290 or (888)671-2349.

Markel Insurance Co. is now offering a new insurance product for arcades, miniature golf, driving ranges, soft modular play systems, laser tag, kiddie rides, and indoor sports. For more information, call (800)431-1270 or (804)527-2700; fax (804)527-7652.

Astro Distributing has devised an upgrade for the shooter assembly, ball hopper assembly, and the ball hopper dispensing assembly for *Shot Clock 2* made by Phoenix Games. To order one, call (800)797-7066 or (309)788-7066; fax (309)786-7067.

Hilton Hotel Corp.'s recent purchase of Bally Entertainment has been approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Hantarex is out, DK Monicor is in. Hantarex Corp. of America, a longtime video monitor supplier, has closed its doors. A new company, DK Monicor, now handles all Hantarex parts and repairs.

DK Monicor is headed by Kevin LeBlanc, former general manager of Hantarex, and his partner Dorothy Dolan. LeBlanc and Dolan have hired a number of key employees from the former company and inform us that the Monicor line features security cameras and monitors including high-resolution SVGA monitors and the new Rio monitors from Italian manufacturer Selti. Both monochrome and color monitors are available; SVGA monitors range from nine-inch to 33-inch sizes.

DK Monicor is located at 1261 Wiley Road, Unit H, Schaumburg, IL 60173; (847)884-0669; fax (847)884-6990

Jeanne Petit has been named senior vice president of Data East USA Inc., effective Aug. 1. Petit retains her post as president of Fabtek Inc., which was named earlier this year to represent all Data East coin-op product in the United States. In addition, Steve Ward, vice president of Fabtek, has been named vice president/consultant for Data East sales.

Rene Lopez, a well-known industry figure, has started a new company, Jo-Dan Inc., for the express purpose of filling the niche of low-cost video game kits. His children Jordan and Dana Marie inspired the company name. Lopez's industry career has included posts at Taito, Romstar, and most recently Capcom Coin-Op in the capacity of vice president.

Jo-Dan Inc. will be based in Barrington Hills, Ill. Lopez can be reached at (847)842-9102; fax (847)842-9122.

Steve Wolf, president of Greater America Distributing, has sold his Omaha, Neb., and Des Moines, Iowa, offices to former banker Mike Sobel, effective Sept. 13. Sobel, who thoroughly researched the industry, also purchased Wolf's 60-plus game route operation known as S & N Enterprises. Wolf opened the Omaha office in 1985; Des Moines followed 18 months later.

Wolf assures that everything will stay exactly the same in the business. He will remain available as a consultant for a few years. Wolf and his wife are retiring to Sun City, Ariz., and also have a summer retreat in Pagosa Springs, Colo. ▲

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UP
FRONT

Much ado about the TRADE SHOWS

Not long ago, presidential hopeful and millionaire businessman Steve Forbes proposed a flat income tax as part of his platform. In our September "Coinman Interview" then-AMOA president Randy Chilton listed as one of his three wishes the taking of about five trade shows and making them into one and calling it a day. Both are possible but not probable.

Chilton echoes the sentiments of fellow coin-op members who continue to be bombarded with information about more trade shows. Yesterday you could count industry trade shows on one hand. Nowadays you can quickly run out of fingers, and toes, if you add up the domestic and overseas trade events that fill the calendar. The overseas arena in particular has seen an explosion of both shows and magazines seeking to serve the market.

BONNIE THEARD

Is it realistic to expect exhibitors to continuously shell out what's necessary to transport manpower and equipment to every trade show that pops up? Can cash-poor operators struggling to maintain their routes take off the necessary time, let alone factor in the travel costs? Adding more to a full plate doesn't mean that exhibitors and attendees will keep coming to an infinite number of events.

Will all of them survive? The answer is, they won't. Consolidation will take place here just as it has in all other areas of the industry. Like a political race, it is difficult to unseat the incumbent who has a high recognition value.

When a new manufacturing firm comes on the scene it is met with a degree of skepticism because it does not yet have a track record. Distributors and operators alike are unsure about taking a chance on the new guy in town. The same applies to trade shows: they each have to prove themselves, not once but over and over again.

The New York Times reporter Douglas Frantz recently wrote of Bob Dole's running mate Jack Kemp that in his athletic career Kemp "was regarded as a quarterback with a strong arm and an ability to scramble in the face of pursuers." In other words, shoot straight and stay ahead of the competition—good traits to have in any field including the trade show game.

The trade show landscape is not likely to change soon. The mother of all trade shows is not around the next corner. Look on the bright side. There is no better way to feel less brutalized by the current market conditions, if not exactly revitalized, than by networking with those who understand your plight. And that happens best at a major trade show. Call it therapy. It is always comforting to know that others are in your same situation and face the same challenges: fighting unreasonable taxation, reducing down time, dealing with demanding location owners or managers, finding and keeping qualified employees, and calculating the return on investment, among other concerns.

There is a clear benefit to a change of scenery: it tends to foster optimism. And with an open mind attendees will find something useful that can apply to their businesses, no matter what shows they decide to attend.

How would the world map look now if Christopher Columbus had not looked past the horizon and accepted the wisdom of his time, that the world was flat? We would be having all these trade shows in Spain. ▲

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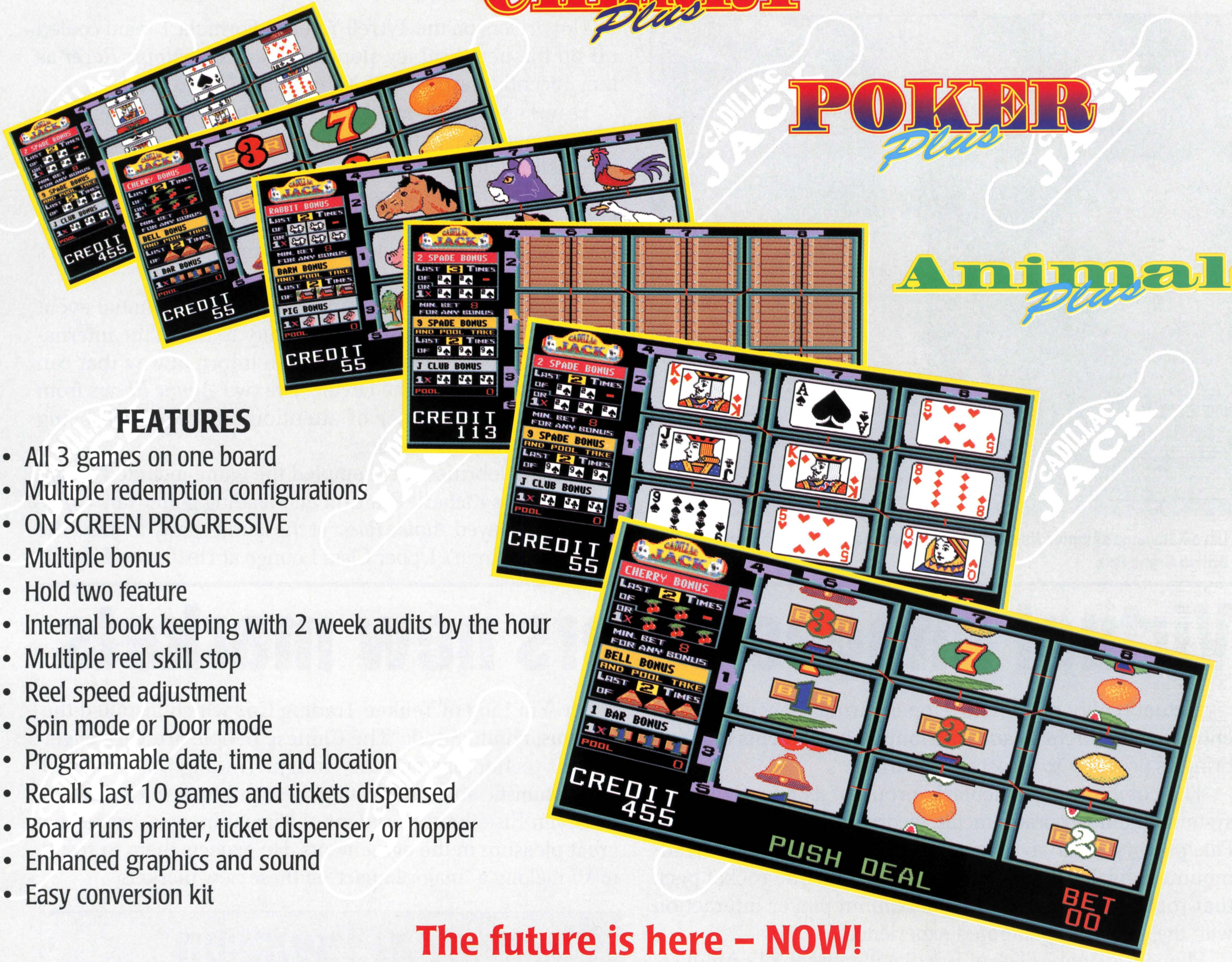
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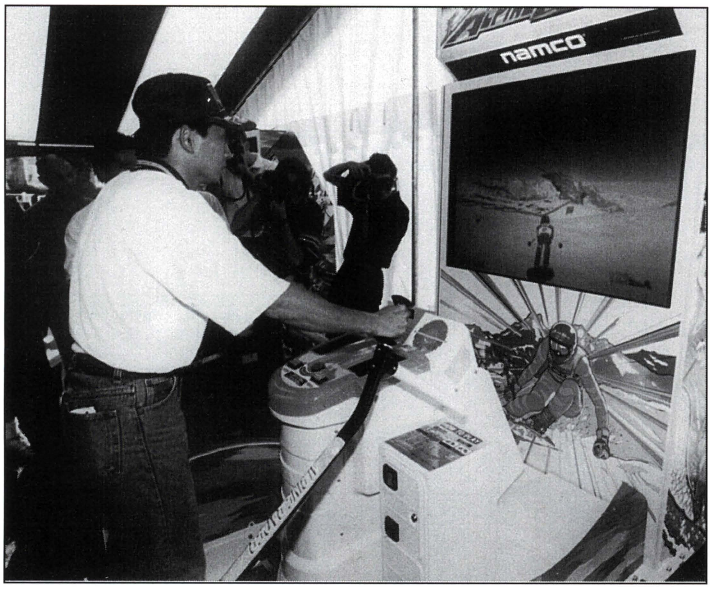
Namco cools down Formula 1 drivers



Ukyo Katayama samples Namco's *Alpine Racer* before taking his place in the British Grand Prix.

Hot drivers on the Tyrrell Yamaha Formula 1 team cooled off on the near-real icy slopes of Namco's *Alpine Racer* as they recently warmed up for the British Grand Prix.

Drivers Mika Salo and Ukyo Katayama were among those who enjoyed the game's challenge that helped them keep their skills sharp.

Partaking of *Alpine Racer* was just one of the activities held before the Silverstone Grand Prix and attended by 250 international Formula 1 celebrities and members of the world's media.

Yamaha's Veronique Beaujardin said, "The annual event provides Yamaha with the opportunity to thank the international media for their support in an informal way that can never be achieved at the circuit. The two *Alpine Racers* from Namco were the center of attention and were still being played late into the evening!"

Other celebrities who sampled the game included Virgin Atlantic boss Richard Branson and leading golfer Ian Woosnam; both played *Alpine Racer* at the launch party to mark the opening of Virgin's Upper Class Lounge at Heathrow Airport.

Virtual Images enters new markets

Virtual reality system developer Virtual Images Inc. has entered into purchase and distribution agreements that will bring its products to a host of countries.

The company is particularly proud of its new CyberPak system that incorporates tactile feedback technology. CyberPak players wear a fully tracked, high-resolution head-mounted display and stand against a futuristic rocket pack that rotates 360 degrees for maximum player interaction with the computer-generated experience.

Planeta Virtual LTDA of Brazil will market VI's products in South America. VI has sold and delivered two CyberPak virtual reality entertainment systems to Planeta Virtual as part of a high-tech, location-based entertainment center that the Brazilian company is building.

Seyang Information Communications Co. Ltd of Seoul, Korea, in conjunction with Trimans Diversified Inc. of California, will market VI products in South Korea. VI has sold and delivered its Reality+ and CyberPak products to Seyang as part of a high-tech center it is building in Seoul.

The HongJu Trading Co. of China, in conjunction with Yenkee Trading Co. of Connecticut, will market VI technology in China. Reality+ and CyberPak systems have been delivered to HongJu and are believed to be the first virtual reality systems to be sold and operated in mainland China.

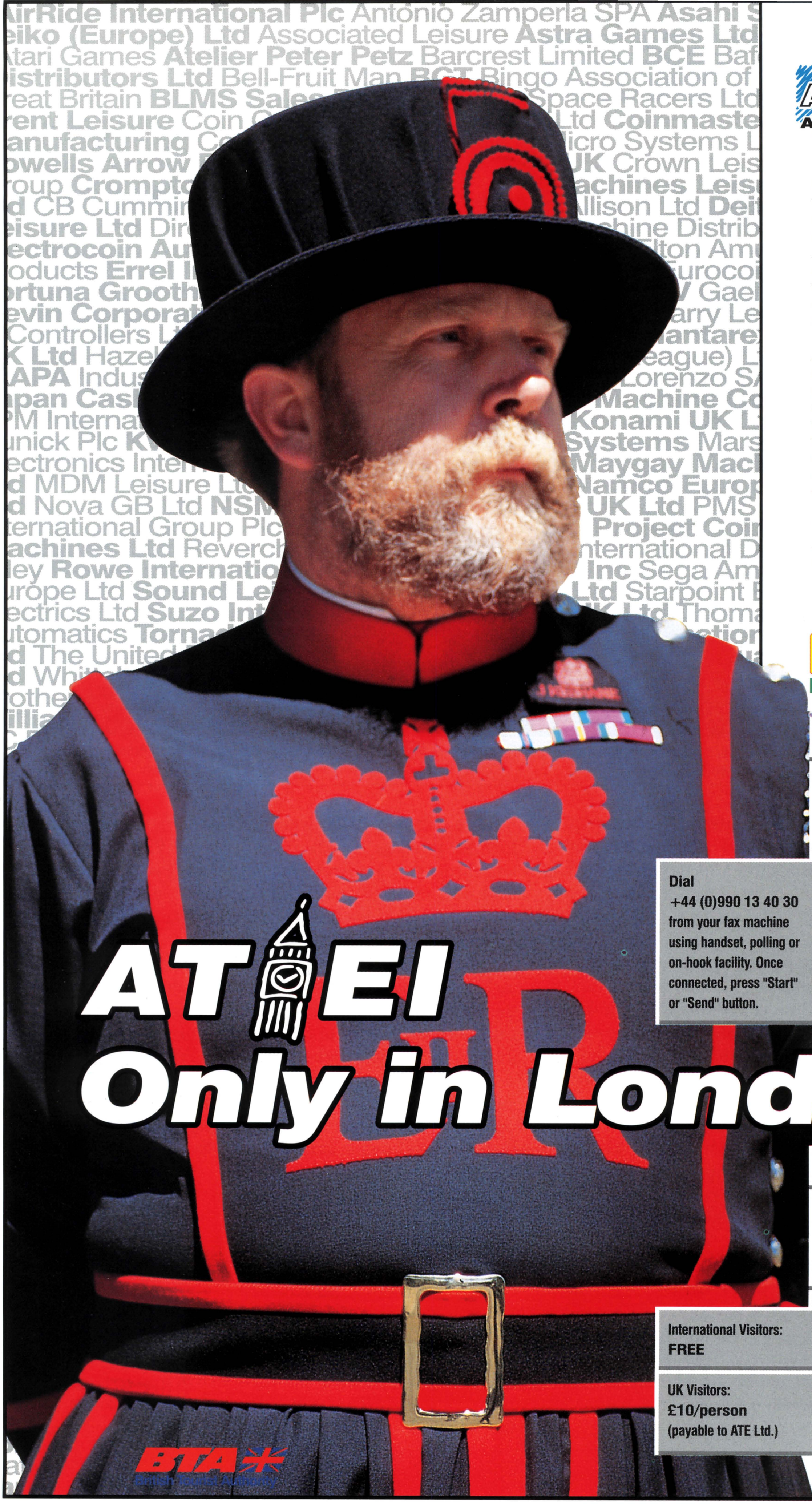
Mr. Yin Ling of Yenkee Trading Co., which installed the systems, commented, "The Chinese people are very eager for this technology and the HongJu Trading Co. is excited and optimistic about marketing these products in China."

Bryan Eisenhart, president of Virtual Images, expressed great pleasure in the agreements. He expects them to result in VI making a "major impact" in these new markets.

Changes at Thomson

Finance director Eric Dumond has been appointed acting general manager of Thomson Training and Simulation following the departure of the general manager and sales and marketing director of the division that makes simulators for the entertainment market.

Thomson chairman Louis LePortz commented, "Changes in management are part of the normal business cycle. Thomson's commitment to the entertainment division has enabled it to grow rapidly to achieve a position as one of the industry's leading entertainment simulation suppliers. We will continue this commitment and maintain all our business development strategy. Our customers can be assured of continuity after the sale, specifically service and support."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Government backs ATEI, FastFax service debuts

REGISTRATION

ATEI continues to offer customer-led services that have contributed to the 410 percent increase in international visitors since 1991.

Two United Kingdom government departments have announced their support for the 1997 Amusement Trades Exhibitions International set for Jan. 21-24 at Earl's Court in London.

The Department of Trade and Industry has agreed to co-fund a high level Inward Mission of Buyers to ATEI and is joined in its support of the exhibition by the British Tourist Authority, which has been impressed by the volume of international trade buyers who visit the show and contribute to the tourist economy.

According to Sonia Meaden, chairman of ATE's board of directors: "This is the fourth consecutive year that ATEI has earned the support of the Department of Trade and Industry. The Inward Mission of Buyers will enable us to host key influencers from a number of countries, including those which have developing amusement sectors. The outline list of markets identified by the DTI includes South Africa, India, Dubai, and the United Arab Emirates.

The second source of government support reflects the popularity of ATEI as a destination for international buyers, which constitute nearly 40 percent of the total number of visitors to the show. The British Tourist Authority will be supporting part of ATEI's London-themed marketing and communications campaign with the BTA logo appearing on all advertising.

ATEI chief executive Peter Rusbridge said, "The contributions of exhibitors and visitors alike has made ATEI into much more than just another amusement exhibition. Through their ongoing support is has become a major business event for the industry, a fact warmly acknowledged by the U.K. government."

In other ATEI-related news, the Parks, Rides and FEC section of the show launched at ATEI '96 has received a major endorsement from Omni, which is part of Little Tikes Commercial Play Systems (a division of Rubbermaid). A statement from the company confirmed, "Trade shows, like customers can be international, national, and local. IAAPA in New Orleans and ATEI in London represent the international leisure scene."

In response to the growing number of international visitors (an increase by 410 percent since 1991), ATEI has launched a new FastFax Communications Service. By dialing +44 990 13 40 30 on your fax machine, you can automatically receive by fax a ticket registration form and a menu of three additional information services.

Additional services, each with its own FastFax number, include hotels and travel, an essential guide to London, and the latest exhibition news and exhibitor lists. The communications service will be updated on a regular basis with hotel availability, exhibitor news, and general ATEI updates.

Rusbridge commented, "We make every effort to be a customer-led exhibition and the FastFax initiative enables our customers to receive a broader range of information on the show and London in far greater detail and at any time of the day."

ATEI has also considered attendee needs regarding local transportation. ATEI '97 will feature a special taxi booking desk to access the capital city's biggest fleet of computerized radio taxis.

During ATEI the European Showmen's Union will host its Presidential Congress Jan. 23 as the focal point of a four-day gathering of the leading figures in the European showmen's movement. The program will include an address from a leading political figure, informal discussions with sister trade associations, an international reception, and a tour of ATEI.

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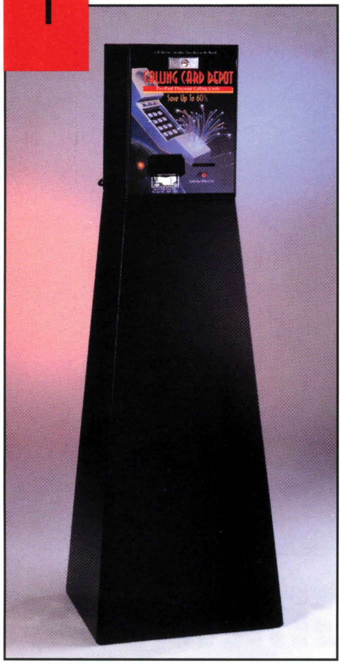

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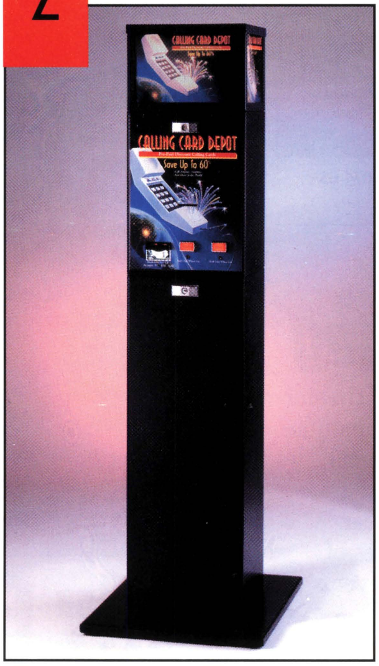

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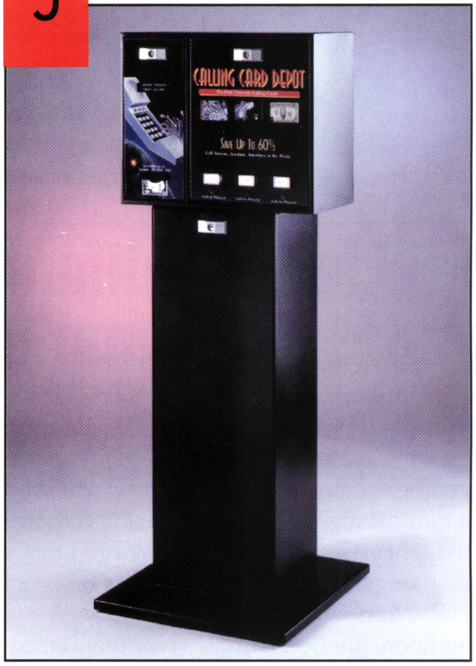

Model 803-D

Calling Card Depot™ vends discount long distance calling cards in three state-of-the-art machines that feature rugged, dependable service. A 4-sided marquee top adorns the two column model and a vacuum fluorescent dot-matrix moving sales message sign is available as an option for additional attraction.

These high-styled calling card vendors are made in one-column, two-column and three-column models to hold 200, 400, or 600 cards using tamper-proof and jam-proof Asahi-Seiko card dispensing units. Adding multiple columns to each machine allows more volume at the same price point or the ability to offer different price points for each column. Bill validators with built-in stackers accommodate up to 300 bills. Operations of all Calling Card Depot™ vending units are controlled by a proven Motorola solid-state microcontroller and proven logic to eliminate jackpots and free vends.

Despite the elegant design of the Calling Card Depot™ machines, they are ruggedly built of handcrafted 14 gauge galvannealed steel, rustproofed inside and out to automotive industry standards for years of durable, safe, tamperproof service. Machines come equipped with a tip and theft-prevention auto style alarm system with powerful siren. Calling Card Depot™ units can be placed on countertops, wall-mounted or stand freely on support cabinets or bases.

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AFTER
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AFTER SHOCK
VIRTUAL REALITY TOUR

StrayLight's After Shock virtual reality tour will see an international expansion.

StrayLight continues special event marketing

StrayLight Corp. has completed its second Virtual Theater production for Hennessy Cognac's Virtual Reality promotional tour. Hennessy wanted a new story line and additional stereoscopic content after the first production finished a successful tour throughout Thailand that lasted over a year.

StrayLight's 12-seat Virtual Theater has raised sales of Hennessy Cognac over 600 percent for on-premise events at night clubs, bars, and restaurants.

In addition, Jim Beam brands has announced an international expansion of its Virtual Reality tour promoting their new liquer, After Shock. The tour will begin in Japan; StrayLight will customize the visuals and the audio to the culture of each country included in the tour.

Other companies that have utilized the marketing draw of StrayLight's custom Virtual Theater productions on the trade show level and in other venues include American Express, AT&T, AVIS, Blockbuster Entertainment, Coca-Cola, Disney Resorts, and People Magazine.

The Virtual Theaters provide immersive full-body experiences that allow large groups to enjoy 3-D adventures with helmets, impact/motion seats, and surround sound.

StrayLight's strategy is to increase brand awareness, reinforce corporate identities, capture media attention, increase sales leads, educate prospective clients, and entertain.

ITPS appoints Garza

Gillermo F. "Willie" Garza has been appointed vice president of operations for the International Theme Park Services Inc./Terra Encantada Project in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Garza was most recently director of operations for Fiesta Texas theme park in San Antonio, Texas, where he was responsible for all day-to-day operations and loss prevention aspects of the park. His career includes posts as director of security, safety, and health services for both Opryland USA in Nashville, Tenn., and Sea World of Texas in San Antonio.

As vice president of operations he will coordinate the safety and operations programs of a $200 million project that will include the development of safety and security procedures, personnel training, budget preparation, scheduling, inventory control procedures, and all other daily operations of the park.

Said Dennis Speigel, president of ITPS: "We are pleased to welcome Willie to ITPS. He will be a tremendous asset to the Terra Encantada project in all areas of park operations."

ITPS is a Cincinnati-based consulting company specializing in theme park design and operation and has been handling the master planning, design assistance, operations planning, and training and recruitment of ongoing senior management for the Terra Encantada project.

Bally Gaming sets record in Europe

Bally Gaming president Hans Kloss reports that the company's European office has shipped a one month record of 1,350 gaming machines to casinos in Europe during the month of June. Destinations were Turkey, Greece, Slovania, Estonia, and Germany.

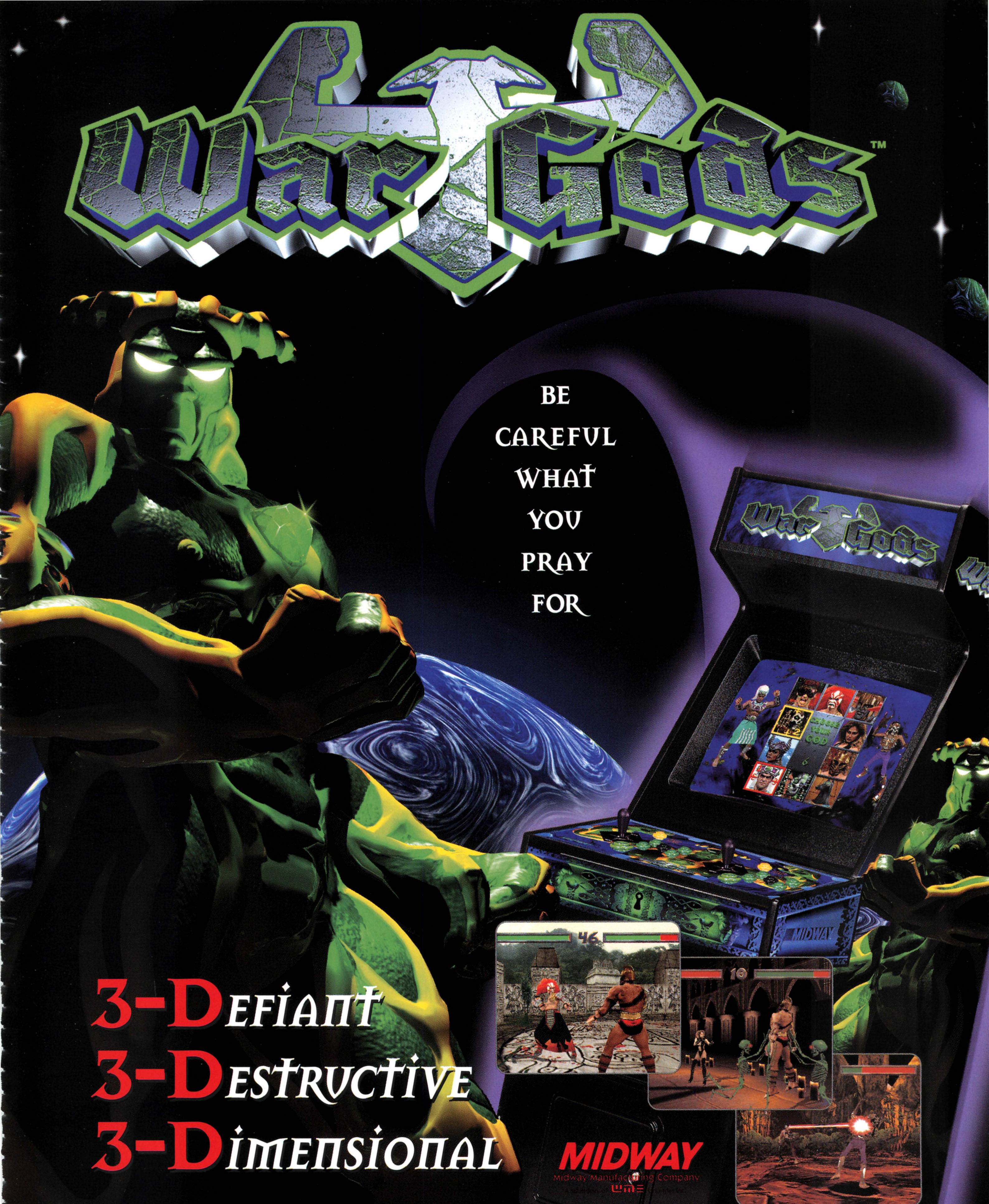
Said Kloss: "These shipments are an indication of Bally Gaming's increasing market share both internationally and domestically, as well as a reflection of the overwhelming acceptance of our ProSeries line of slot and vending machines. Our European managing director Jens Halle has done a terrific job servicing our overseas customers, and we expect to continue strong sales within this important marketplace."

Fujimoto joins Sunwise

Max Fujimoto, former vice president of Data East USA, has relocated to Japan to join Sunwise Co. Ltd. of Tokyo. Sunwise is a leading developer and manufacturer of prize/redemption games in Japan.

Industry friends and associates can reach Fujimoto at 81 422 31 0091; fax 81 422 31 1091.

Max Fujimoto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Overseas news bites

Several interesting developments have recently been chronicled in Japan's Game Machine magazine:

☛ Capcom Co. Ltd., Osaka, unveiled its new 32-bit coin-op video game board, Capcom System III, which upgrades the 16-bit CPII System but does not have computer graphics capability. The first game for CPIII is *Warzard*; the second is *Street Fighter III*.

☛ SNK Corp. has established SNK Singapore Pte. Ltd., its second subsidiary in Southeast Asia.

☛ At the annual general meeting of the Japan Amusement Machinery Manufacturers Association, president Hayao Nakayama of Sega expressed some industry concerns. He was quoted: "The last year has seen arcade operations decrease conspicuously, and the situation of the domestic coin-op business is far from reassuring. There are various reasons such as arcades becoming the haunt of mania game players, games enjoyable by everyone being few in number, and 32-bit home videos quickly catching up with coin-op videos. The control by the Fuei Law is another major cause. We must realize the severity of the situation and endeavor to find a way out."

☛ Nintendo Co. Ltd. of Kyoto, Nomura Research Institute Ltd. of Tokyo, and Microsoft Japan Co. of Tokyo will create an information service using personal computers and a digital broadcast satellite system.

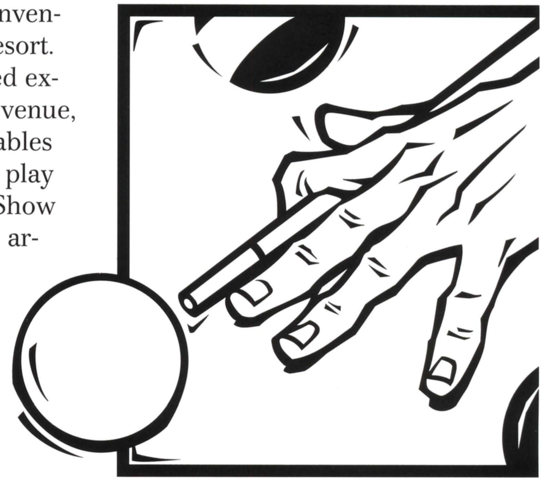
The project was explained as "an attempt to integrate the information service of Satellite Digital Audio Broadcasting Co., the Nintendo affiliate involved in satellite data broadcasting, and Microsoft Network, the worldwide information service, by means of a personal computer. The three companies explain that the information will be provided by Nintendo focusing on the latest entertainment news."

A satellite modem will be developed by Nintendo and device driver software will be developed by Microsoft. Connecting the satellite modem and Windows 95 will make it possible to link up to the service. Unlike the Internet, this system will obtain information without using telephone lines.

AMOAQ schedules pool spectacular

The Amusement Machine Operators Association of Queensland will pay homage to coin-op pool tables at its upcoming convention Nov. 5-9 at the Royal Pines Resort on Queensland's Gold Coast.

Most of Australia's pool table manufacturing companies will display their wares at the Pool Table Spectacular set up in the convention lobby of the resort. AMOAQ has invited experts to theme the venue, and there will be tables available for social play and tournaments. Show organizers feel this arrangement will "give operators a great opportunity to compare features offered by competing suppliers."



In addition, Mario Bandera of Consolidated Leisure & Sports of Melbourne will conduct a pool table covering demonstration. Australian champions are scheduled to appear as well as a talented group of beautiful hustlers called the Hot Shots. The pool area will be surrounded by displays of associated products and accessories.

Entertainment on the AMOAQ convention agenda includes a Gala Dinner on Nov. 7 and a dinner and show at Jupiters Casino on Nov. 8.

Vivid's Mandala VR Systems go global

The Vivid Group, the Toronto, Canada-based company known for its Mandala Virtual Reality Gaming Systems, has completed over 300 successful permanent and semi-permanent installations in Europe, Asia, South America, and North America.

The Mandala system allows participants to view themselves on projection screens and interact with animations surrounding their live on-screen video image. Mandala's state-of-the-art tracking system reads players' movements and allows for full body interaction without having to wear, touch, or hold anything. The virtual reality engine is powered by Vivid Group's new high-end Pentium-based system.

A sample of the variety of environments where the newest Mandala installations are located include: Dublin, Ireland, at the Parnell Center, a retail and entertainment complex; Seoul, Korea, at the Lotteworld entertainment center; Helsinki, Finland, at Pelika Ray Oy's flagship family entertainment center; and Dubai, United Arab Emirates at Q-Zar Middle East's laser tag arena at Burjuman Center.

The Mandala system is also on view at a number of interactive museum exhibits around the world: the Scienceworks Science Center in Australia; the Japan Water Pavillion in Japan; the Pusan Children's Museum, the Pohnag Children's Museum, and the Daeion National Science Museum, all in Korea; the Hong Kong Science Center in Hong Kong; and the Taichung Ocean Aquarium in Taiwan.

International Calendar

October 17-20
ENADA, Rome Fairgrounds, Rome, Italy. Call +39 644-03686; fax +39 644-02718.

October 24-26
Park Show International, Rimini Trade Fair Centre, Italy. Call +44 1323 442747; fax +44 1323 840014.

October 30-November 1
IAE and SAGSE '96, Sheraton Buenos Aires Hotel, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Call +39 2 839-5696; fax +39 2 894-04081.

October 30-November 1
Gamex '96, Gallagher Estate, Midrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. Call +44 161-624 3687; fax +44-161 665 1260.

November 5-9
AMOAQ '96, Royal Pines Resort, Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia. Call Ken Priest, 01-7-3841-1021; fax 01-7-3841-1332.

November 28-30
JAMMA Hong Kong, Hong Kong Convention Centre, Hong Kong. Call +813 3438 2363; fax +813 3438 2721.

December 1-3
EELEX '96, Moscow, Russia. Call John Slattery, +44 161 624 3687; fax +44 161 665 1260.

December 10-11
LeisureIndia, Leela Kempinski Hotel, Bombay, India. Call Gerry Robinson, +44 1905 613256; fax +44 1905 724768.

December 10-13
AmuseExpo/ForainExpo '96, Le Bourget Parc des Expositions, Paris, France. Call +33 1 4756 2107; fax +33 1 4756 2110.

1997

January 9-12
SEKEP Expo '97, European Exhibition and Promotion Center, Athens, Greece. Call +30 1 825 1609; fax +30 1 821 1661.

January 21-24
ATEI '97, Earls Court, London, England. Call Peter Rusbridge, +44 171 713 0302; fax +44 171 713 0446.

January 22-25
IMA '97, Frankfurt Fairgrounds, Frankfurt, Germany. Call +49 211 901 9183; fax +49 211 901 9127. ▲

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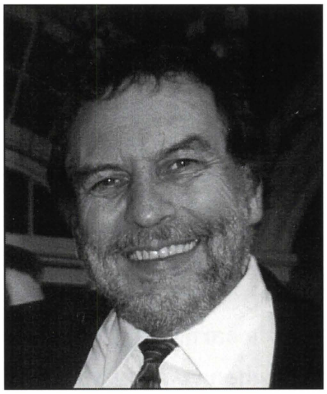
WHO'S NEWS

NOLAN BUSHNELL, the man often referred to as the "father of video," has been selected as the 1997 honoree of the American Amusement Machine Charitable Foundation.

The legendary coin-op figure will be feted at a banquet in his honor during the Amusement Showcase International trade show set for March 17-19 in Las Vegas next year.

Bushnell is currently applying his vision at Aristo, a new company that recently introduced three products: *Teamnet*, *Touchnet*, and *Musicnet*, networked entertainment systems that utilize the Internet to add vitality and excitement to the coin-op world.

Bushnell has long been heralded for his creativity and innovation, much-needed qualities at this point in the history of the industry. A frequent guest speaker at coin-op events, Bushnell always draws a crowd. Congratulations Nolan!


Nolan Bushnell

SHELLEY FERNANDEZ-KATZ has been promoted to the post of president at Merchandise International, a company that specializes in importing and special purchasing for the entertainment and specialty retail trade including merchandise and supply items.

Fernandez-Katz had been vice president in charge of operations since June 1991. Merchandise International is based in Honolulu, Hawaii, and New Jersey.

Her work entails seeking out unique and interesting products to support the various entities of Fernandez Entertainment Inc. and other U.S. customers. She foresees explosive growth in the Pacific Rim.

Shelley Fernandez-Katz

Karyn Gitler

KARYN GITLER has been named director of merchandising for ShowBiz Pizza Time Inc. She will specialize in the merchandising arena and travel to merchandise shows to find appropriate prizes for the company's ShowBiz Pizza Place and Chuck E. Cheese family fun centers and pizza restaurants around the globe.

"We're glad to have Karyn on board," commented ShowBiz senior vice president and director of games management Gene Cramm. Gitler, who was formerly with Discovery Zone, will be based at the ShowBiz headquarters in Irving, Texas. She can be reached at (214)258-8507; fax (214)659-9416.

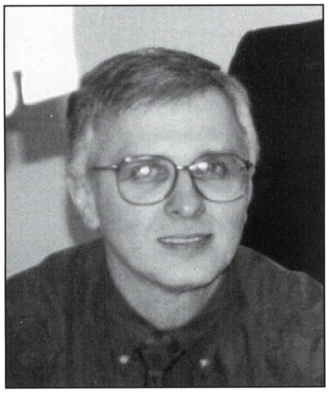
RICHARD HADDRILL has been elected president of Video Lottery Technologies and named to its board of directors. VLT includes three subsidiaries—Automated Wagering International, Video Lottery Consultants, and United Tote—that are suppliers of system software, equipment, and related services for video lotteries, on-line lotteries, and pari-mutuel systems.

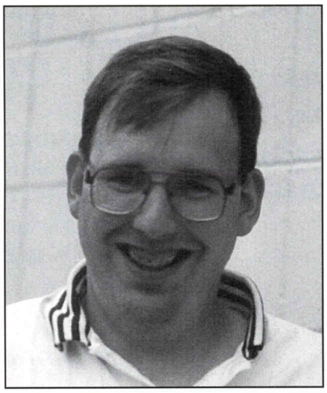
Haddrill joined the company in December 1994 as executive vice president and chief financial officer. Regarding his new post Haddrill said, "I welcome the opportunity my expanded role offers to meet the significant challenges facing our company, and to reaffirm the commitment to provide our customers with the highest level of service and technological superiority in all aspects of our business.

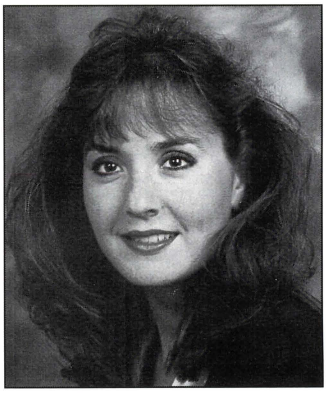
JOHN KUBIK has been promoted from director of game development to vice president of redemption and novelty for game maker Bromley Inc. of Northbrook, Ill.

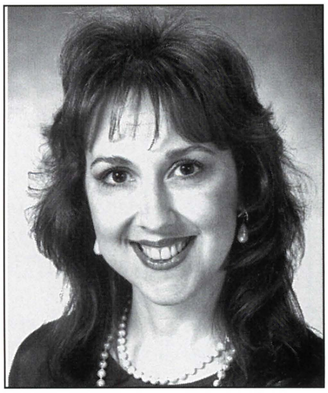
Kubik has been with Bromley for five years and will oversee Bromley's worldwide interests, such as the 18,000-square-foot Funland family entertainment center in Chicago.

An industry veteran with over 23 years experience, Kubik has worked in engineering and product development for a number of com-


John Kubik


Bob Peterson


Anita Platacis


Donna Thomas

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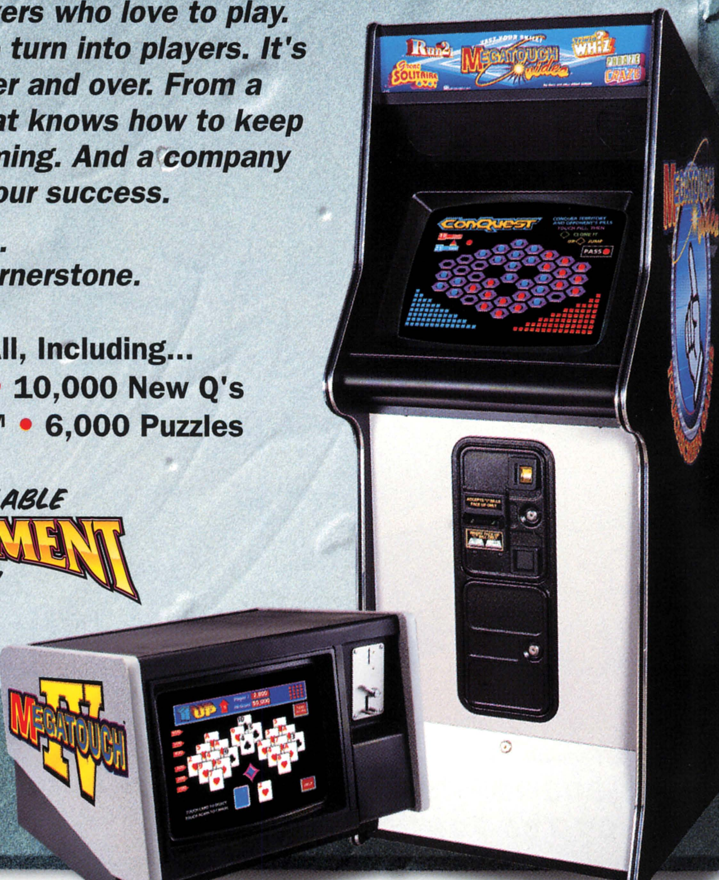
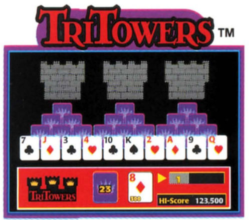

Run21
Megatouch
Trivia Whiz
Great Solitaire
Phraze Craze
ConQuest
1UP
Megatouch IV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Hi-Score 123,500

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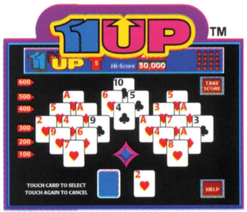
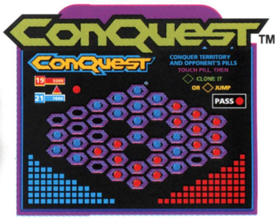

1UP™
TAKE SCORE
HELP

NEW!


ConQuest™
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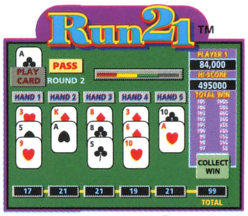
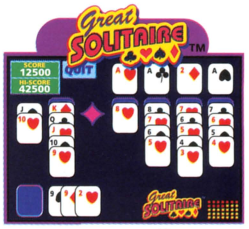
PASS

NEW!


Run21™
PLAY CARD
PASS
ROUND 2
COLLECT WIN
TOTAL

CLASSIC


Great Solitaire™
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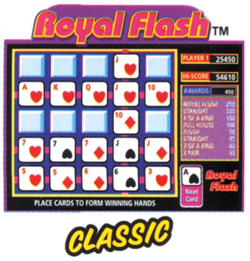
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1•800•523•2760 *http://meritind.com 215•639•4700 FAX 215•639•5346* panies, such as Bally/Midway and Grand Products, as well as private contract engineering projects. He has been instrumental in Bromley's string of successful games.

Bromley president Lauran Bromley commented, "I am delighted with the promotion and feel that our company will continue to be a driving force in the amusement industry for years to come.

The company plans to debut a new game at the IAAPA show in New Orleans in November. Hint: it is a "super" new redemption title that will have players flipping so many coins they will need "stunt" men to help catch them.

BOB PETERSON has joined the staff of Hanson Distributing Co. of Bloomington, Minn., as operations manager. He comes to Hanson from Beachfield Inc., one of Hanson's gaming suppliers.

Peterson has extensive experience in gaming, communications, and technical service. In addition, he has a management background that will prove invaluable in his role as service manager and in coordinating installations and service work both in the amusement and gaming areas.

ANITA PLATACIS has been appointed as sales coordinator for Namco-America Inc. Her responsibilities will include coordinating all shipments of products from the manufacturing facilities.

Said Frank Cosentino, vice president of sales and marketing: "We are pleased that Anita has joined our company and consider her vast industry experience a substantial addition to the team."

Platacis' coin-op career started in 1989 at Taito America Corp. as a coin-op sales assistant; she later moved to the consumer division as a sales coordinator and then back to coin-op as sales administrator. Her duties included coordinating all shipments plus booking and creating trade magazine ads, press releases, brochures, and promotional materials. She also coordinated all the trade shows and was the market test coordinator.

In June 1995 Platacis joined Capcom Coin-Op as sales coordinator. She was promoted to sales administrator this past May. At Capcom she was involved in all communications with both domestic and international customers, as well as the coordination of domestic and European trade shows.

DONNA THOMAS has been named accounting manager for the North American Bill Validator Division of JCM at its Las Vegas home base.

Thomas brings 10 years of accounting and budgeting experience along with training, supervising, auditing, and analytical skills to the company. She was a former manager at Martin Geller CPA and a senior auditor at Coopers & Lybrand in New York. While at Geller she created an international pricing structure to enable their primary client to be more competitive abroad. ▲

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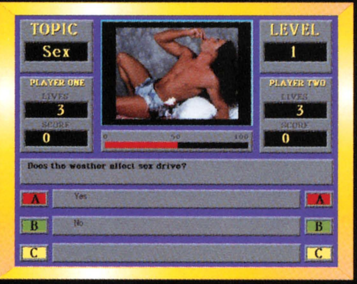
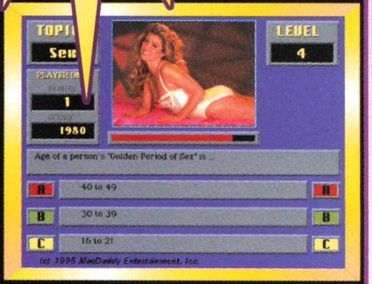

TOPIC
Sex
LEVEL
1
PLAYER ONE
LIVES
3
SCORE
0
PLAYER TWO
LIVES
3
SCORE
0
0
50
100
A
B
C

Does the weather affect sex drive?

A Yes

B No

C


TOPI
Sex
LEVEL
4
PLAYER ON
BONUS
1
SCORE
1980
A
B
C

Age of a person's 'Golden Period of Sex' is ...

A 40 to 49

B 30 to 39

C 16 to 21

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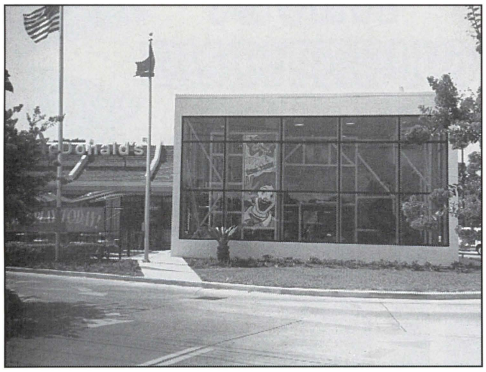
BEYOND THE PLAYFIELD

Need a new sports-themed game to welcome the fall/winter season? Sega Pinball's vice president of engineering and design Joe Kaminkow (l) and game designer John Borg suggest the *Sega Sports* coin drop game that offers football, hockey, and basketball action at the same time. Kaminkow and Borg, seen at the company's Melrose park, Ill., factory, advise that a limited number of *Sega Sports* games are still available. Check with your local Sega distributor.



Soft modular play build-outs such as those undertaken by national fast-food chains are a testament to the popularity and value perception of this entertaining activity. Indoor and outdoor facilities such as these pictured are dotting the landscape, making it possible for families to linger while children expend some of their excess energy. Not since the advent of the drive-up window have so many food outlets jumped on one bandwagon. For more on the soft modular play market, check out this month's "FEC Focus."

It's official. As reported in last month's "News Bulletin," Cleveland Coin Machine has opened a new branch in the Detroit suburb of Livonia, Mich., and created a wholesale redemption toy division. CCME principals who made the announcement are, (l-r): Art Zurowski, game sales manager; Ron Gold, president; Jim Brandt, vending sales manager; and Byron Howard, branch manager.

PINBALL TOURNAMENT
AMOA
Music Operators Associatio

The AMOA promoted amusement industry awareness at the association's exhibit at the annual National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), held July 28-30 in St. Louis. The conference is a major gathering of the nation's state government leaders that affords an opportunity to discuss issues face-to-face with state leaders, broaden contacts with state officials, increase awareness of new and critical state legislative issues, and present products and services to the people who influence buying decisions.

In addition, AMOA sponsored the NCSL Children's Game Room with equipment provided by Warehouse of Vending & Games of St. Louis, and hosted a pinball tournament in the booth with prizes provided by Ace/Acme of Los Angeles and Chicago. Manning the booth are, (l-r): AMOA board member Rich Holley of Southeast Game Brokers, AMOA staffer Kim Rundle and former AMOA government liaison Laura Olson, AMOA vice president Bill Treger of Casino Data Systems, and Tom Cobb of Acme Vending and Amusements. ▲

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ROLLA WIN

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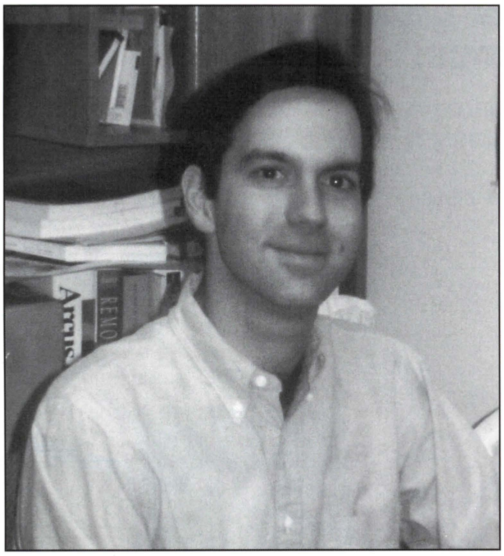
FROM LEFT **FIELD**

Is this the new REVOLUTION?

STEVE WHITE

The coming of fall here in New Orleans is marked by a calming of the intermittent tempest we call summer. Torrential rain storms, which blow in and out with the regularity of a commuter train, are followed rapidly by blazing sunshine giving credence to the age-old adage: If you don't like the weather, wait 10 minutes.



Fall weather has also brought an idea to the coin-op industry that may calm the raging economic storms we have been experiencing over the last several years—or may be just another passing storm. The concept is a universal PC-based platform that will bring networked games as well as other computer services to commercial locations.

The proponents of this new idea claim it is vice president Al Gore's vision of a democratic information superhighway embodied, or maybe, to use a Louisiana metaphor, a cyberspace version of Huey Long's promise of a chicken in every pot. How about every man a technological king?

It's an intriguing idea, bringing high technology to the working class who are starved for access to the newest and the best but cannot afford to buy the equipment. The idea is currently being pursued by AMOA's National Amusement Network Inc. (NANI) and Nolan Bushnell's start-up company Aristo, but there are surely many others out there just waiting to test the waters.

John Klayh of Canadian-based TVphone, a partner with AMOA in NANI, says coin machine operators are uniquely suited to bring this technology to the public in a cost-effective manner. They have been doing it for decades now without fully realizing their potential, he argues, because the industry has been too much of a closed society.

In between rain showers this summer, I got my own taste of high-tech when I attended SIGGRAPH '96, the country's biggest computer graphics show and a veritable playground of 21st century toys that brought 25,000 attendees to the Crescent City. "We can bring the kind of things you saw at SIGGRAPH to a huge market," Klayh told me later.

So where does this leave traditional coin-op manufacturers? First, it will thrust them into a more competitive environment, vying with hundreds of other software developers for the relatively small base of operator customers, who in turn will benefit from this wider availability of games according to conventional wisdom.

However, this should not be looked upon as a mortal threat to large coin-op manufacturers. Just as operators are in the best position to capitalize on this new opportunity because of their earned experience in the market, so too should manufacturers be the best outlet to provide popular games for this new medium. They already have extensive research and development divisions, access to the best game designers, and proven test markets.

Furthermore, a broadening of the customer base through increased game availability should be beneficial to all. In fact, during the past year of factory closings a number of manufacturers have told us that the loss of a competitor spells trouble for the whole industry. Competition is good for business, they say. Providing a new commercial outlet for game software developers should reinvigorate that competitive spirit.

But a second question still lingers large on this networked landscape: where do distributors fit into the equation? The principle players in these new ventures are adamant about the crucial role distributors will play, but is that a temporary role of selling units that will quickly saturate the market and leave them high and dry?

A little over a year ago, I unwittingly fell into a discussion on this very subject with several young and technologically savvy members of the industry, one of whom worked for a major distributor. The future of downloaded games is coming, they concluded at the time, and distributors will face the greatest challenges. In fact, their role may evolve radically, with possibilities ranging far and wide, from licensing independent software to maintaining complicated networked systems that manufacturers do not have the resources to handle.

With answers to these fundamental questions still unknown and a host of others lurking just below the surface, it remains to be seen whether a PC-based game platform will revitalize the coin machine business, and if so, who will benefit and who will suffer. Like any major market shift, hindsight is always 20/20 and prophecy myopic at best.

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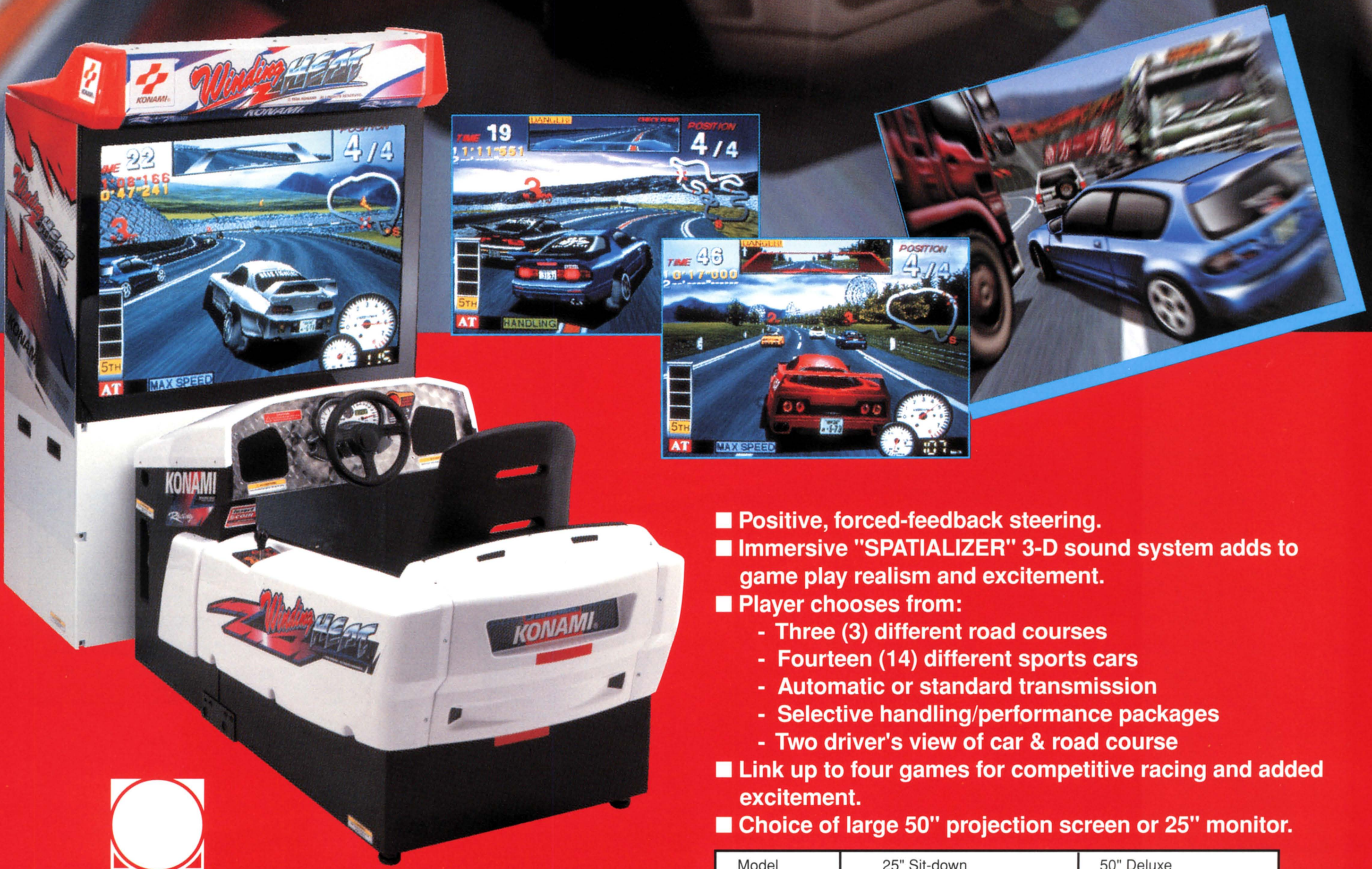

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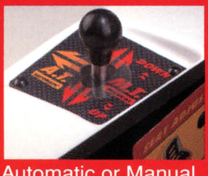
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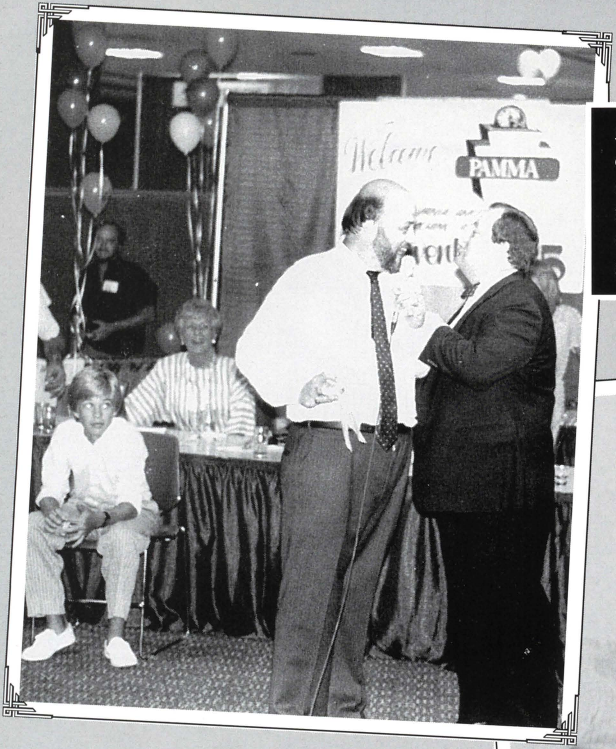
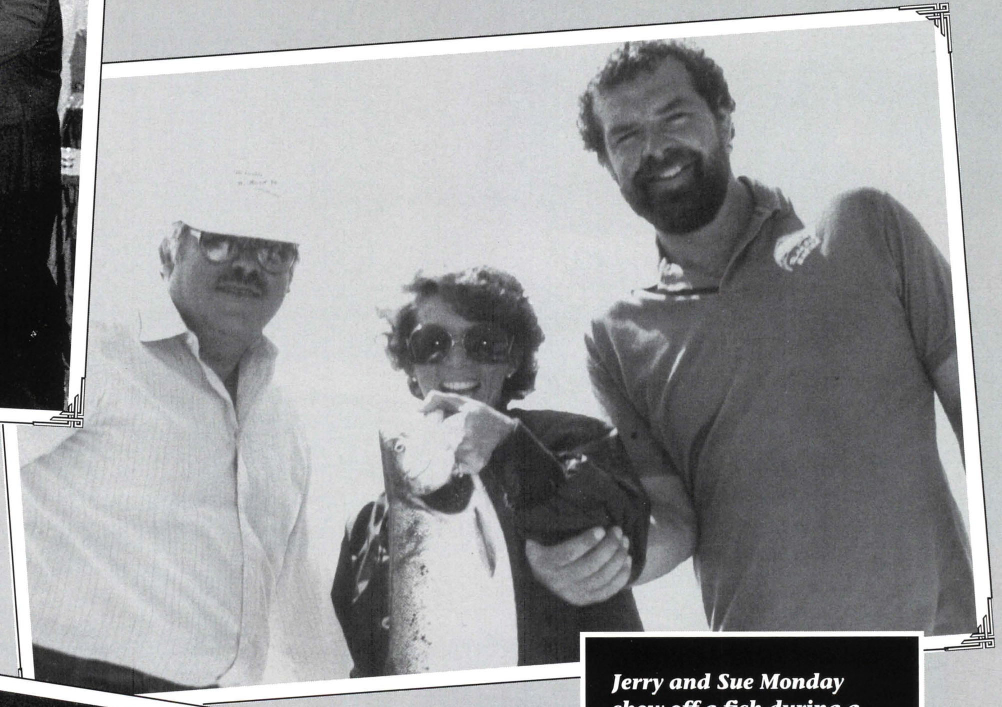
Pictures from the past



I certainly wouldn't want to come between these two during a heated discussion! It looks like Joe Dillon (r) is getting his point across to Bill Cravens, who finds it all rather amusing. Notice little Todd Cravens on the chair to the left. He's all grown up now and working with his dad.



Jerry and Sue Monday show off a fish during a Nintendo distributor meeting in 1984. Sure it looks like they slaved over a hot hook for this beauty, but there's really way more to the story! The fishing guide (r) looks on.

United Distributors' Mark Blum watches as his wife Nancy tries her luck on a motorcycle ride a few years ago at AMOA.

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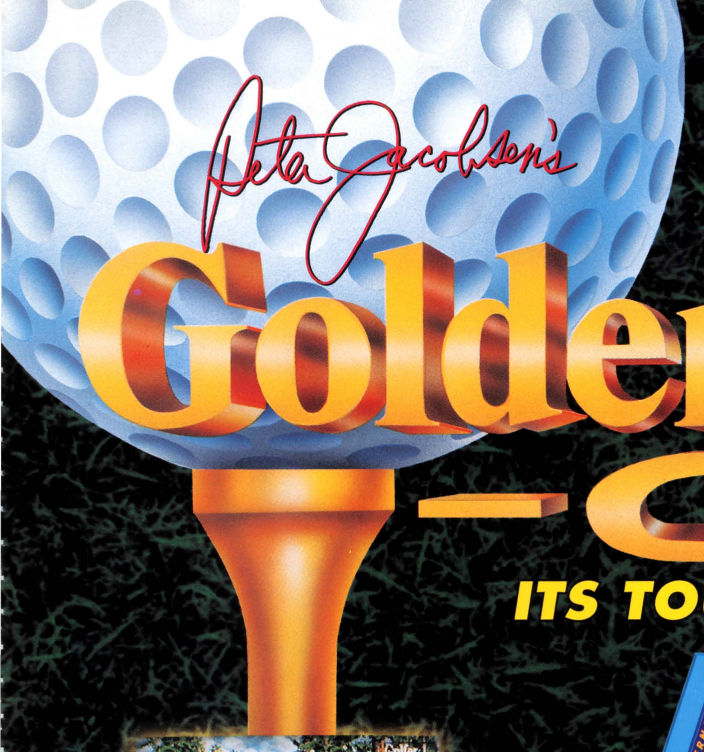

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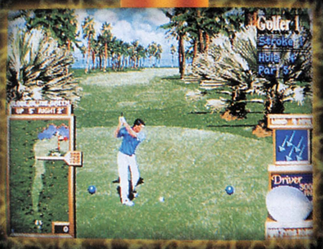
Golfer 1
Stroke
Hole
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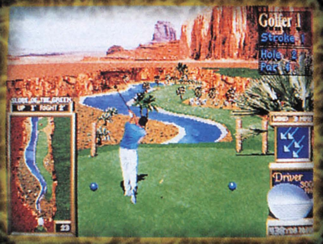
Driver


Golfer 1
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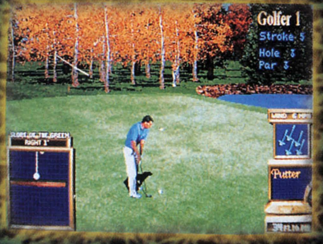
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Hole 3
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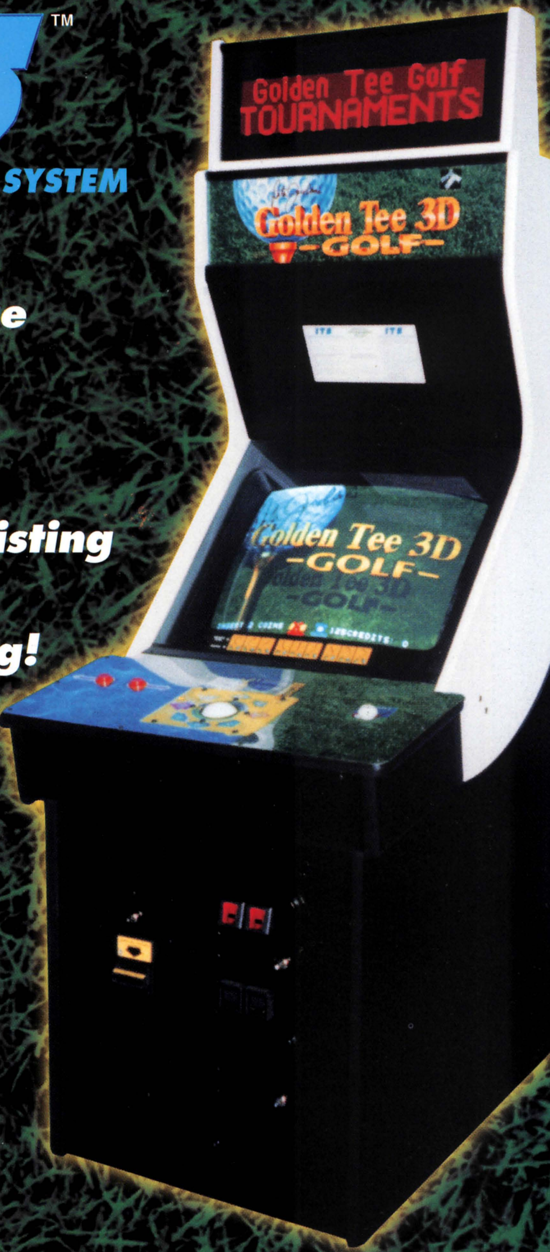
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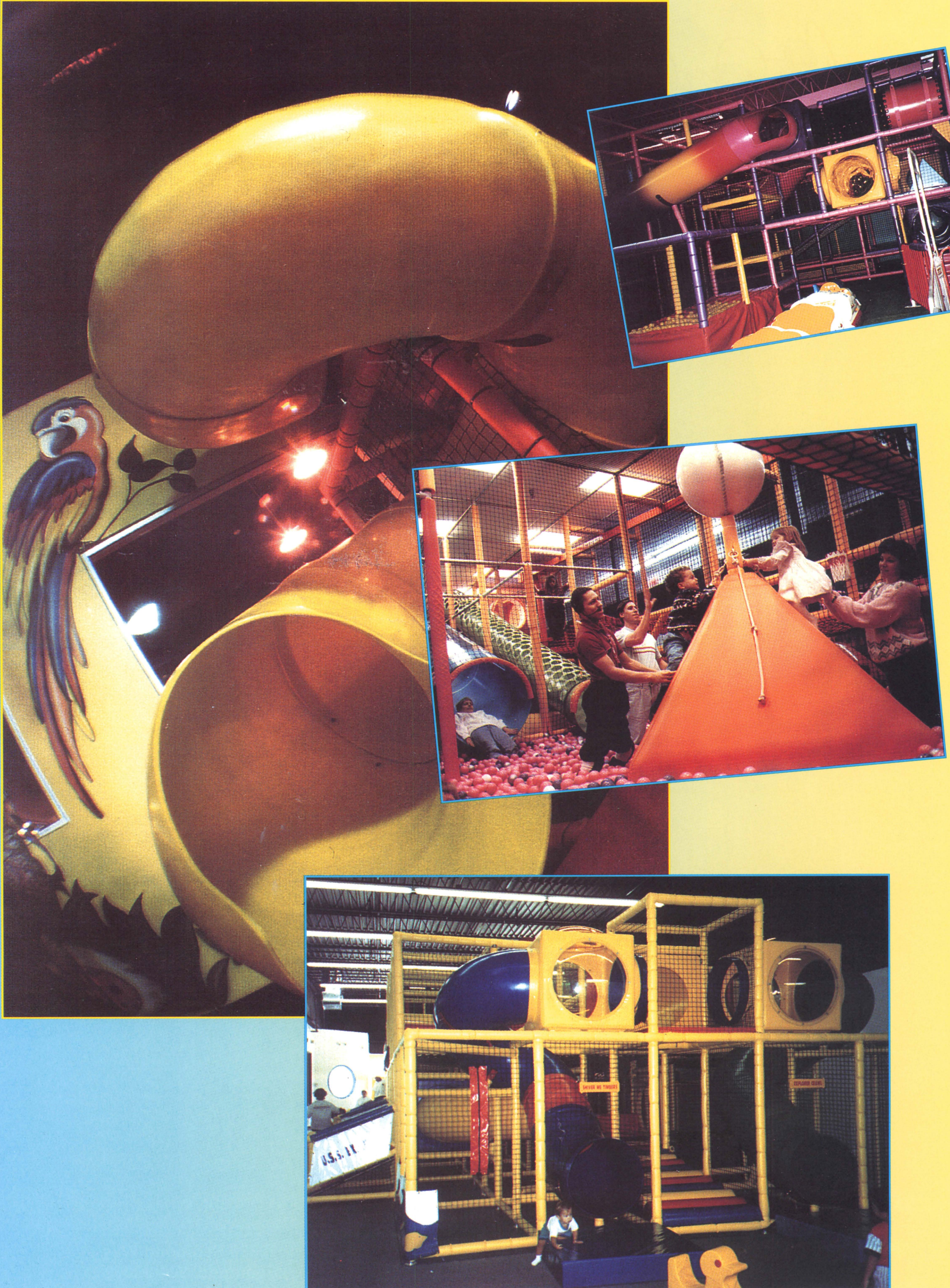
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Indoor fun: more than just CHILD'S PLAY

When it comes to creating unique play experiences, there is no match for the imagination of a child and no better context for nurturing these youthful flights of fancy than the modular indoor playgrounds that populate family fun centers around the world.

STEVE WHITE

Soft activity zones or modular play systems have found universal appeal both with children and their parents, the latter group viewing them as helpful to the mental and physical development of their children.

"Most activities in FECs or arcades have a very short play time," noted Michael Drummond of Canadian-based manufacturer Prime Play Systems Inc. "To entertain two children for two hours a family needs other options. The children need an activity which consumes their imagination and physically challenges them for the duration of their stay."

Expanding on this notion, industry pioneer Jack Pentes of Pentes Play Inc. said that offering play structures expands the accessibility for family business in the truest sense. "Play completes the circle and provides activity for every age group," he explained. "Thus, the facility increases income, attendance, and profits immediately."

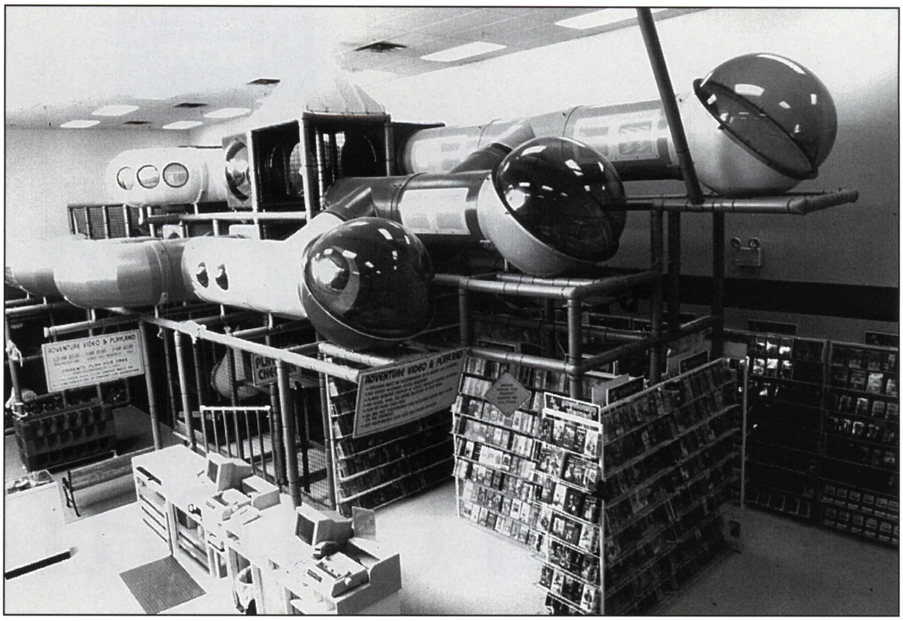
However, companies that manufacture these systems also say that increased expectation and sophistication on the part of today's children require FEC operators to provide more than just a stage for acting out fantasies. Innovation, both in design and available activity, is the key to success in the current market.

"Tubes, cubes, and slides no longer flip anybody's buttons," contends Larry Reed, director of family fun center sales for Little Tikes Commercial Play Systems/Omni Inc. "Ideally, you want kids to be drug out kicking and screaming. The more a child wants to go back to a certain attraction, the higher the play value."

"A play system's value," adds Drummond, "depends on the amount of playable activities, not tubes."

So how do you achieve this goal? "The idea is to give everything the guy down the street has and then one or two other things," says Steven Yanosik with Tunnels & Tubes Inc. "Lately we have been theming our units and going with electronic music."

Yanosik said the addition of bells and whistles does not necessarily mean the addition of more space or activities. For instance, one of Tunnels & Tubes' recent clients had their system themed with moving space ships



Soft Play's systems are finding their way into many different types of locations like this video rental store.

and planets that added $20,000 to the overall costs. Additionally, the company can provide layouts that include other unique themes including circus, jungle, and nautical settings.

"Tubes, cubes, and slides no longer flip anybody's buttons."

These types of innovations are what generate the necessary repeat customers that make these systems appealing for operators. "The biggest mistake operators make is just placing it in a corner," said Reed. "We're finding operators dedicating more space and placing the systems over the top of games or other attractions such as bumper boats. By doing this you have the interaction between activities and increase the appeal."

Yanosik adds that often the formula for success lies at a location owner's fingertips. "A lot of times we get great ideas from the location that we would never think of."

Getting down to the basics

While the most obvious question for newcomers might seem to be, "How much space do I need?" manufacturers say square footage is not necessarily as important as the design plan and height of a soft activity structure.

Some systems can stretch to the ceiling and have a footprint of anywhere from 20 feet by 20 feet on up. A minimum ceiling height of eight feet is recommended by some, as well as an open aisle of six feet around the exterior of the structure. Smaller systems usually work better as free-play marketing tools, while larger units are ideally suited as pay-for-play attraction.

Factoring in these elements, custom units can cost anywhere between $20,000 and $200,000. "Each unit is different," said Yanosik. "We're trying to fit the largest unit in the existing location."

"It depends on your use," added Reed. "You can take this product and spread it out and it can have the appearance of being more than it is. But if you are going to charge, you want to spend more money and have more activities so you get repeat business."

Some basics to consider are budget, space requirements, safety, flexibility, design options, warranty, assembly arrangement, parts availability, and hands-on cooperation from a manufacturer.

According to Pentes, facilities of 10,000 square feet or more should devote a minimum of 15 to 20 percent of floor space for the play system foot-

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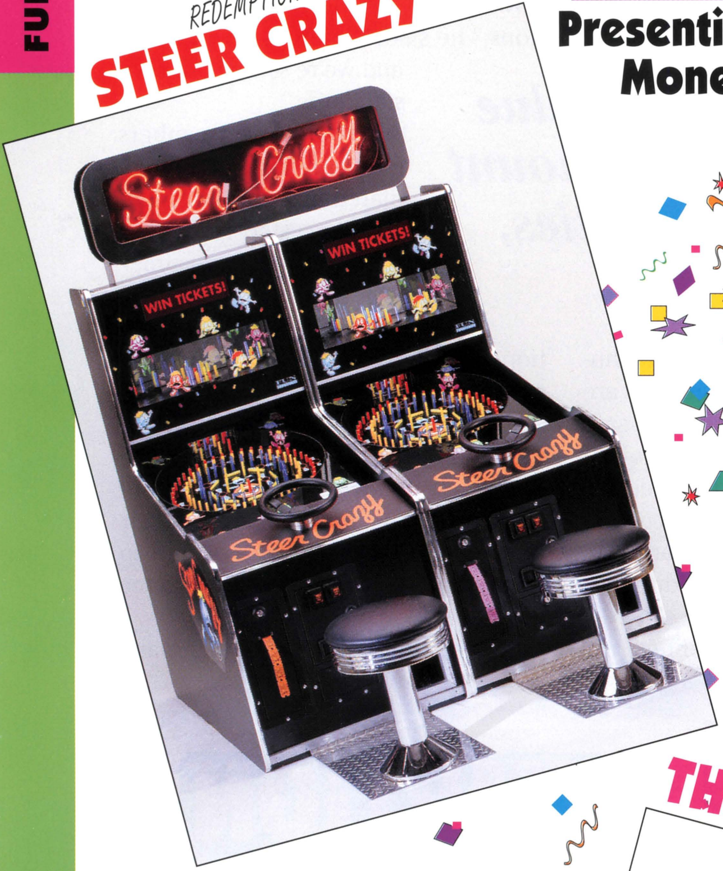
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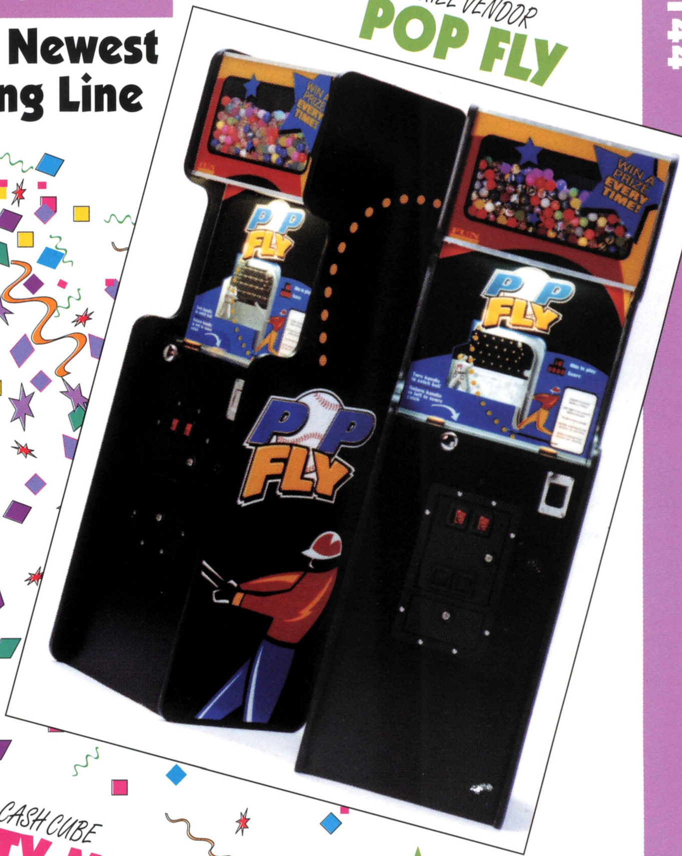
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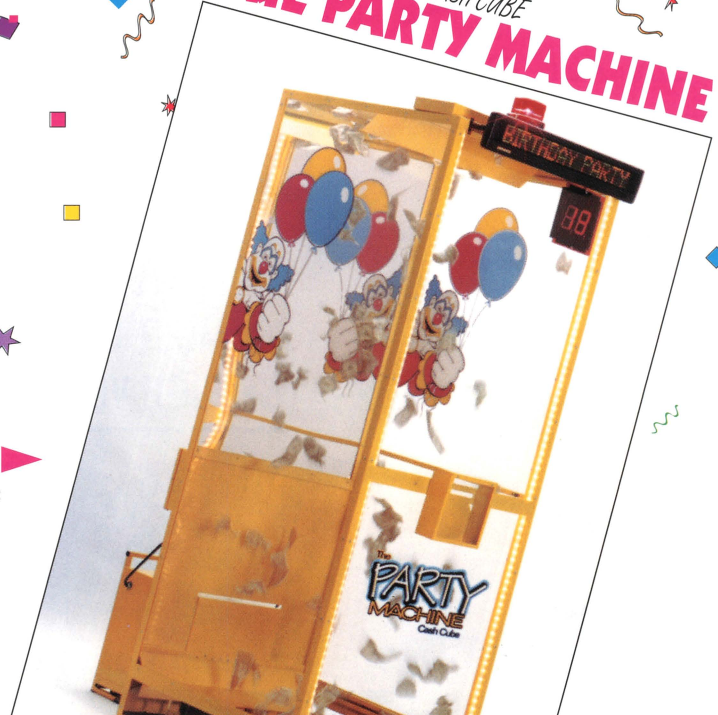
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print. There are several ways to calculate cost, he said, adding that such formulas will always vary some with the selection of play events. The first method is calculated according to levels with a single level averaging $100 per square foot and that figure increasing to $135 and $166 for two- and three-level systems respectively. A second method is estimated by multiplying capacity by $1,000. In other words, a system for 150 children would cost $150,000.

When looking at the actual product, Drummond said his company, Prime Play Systems, stresses to operators the need for quality vinyl, tubes, and component joints. "It is essential that the supplier manufacture all components and install all components in order to maintain quality control," he asserted. "Also, installation by the supplier of the play system eliminates the conflict between the installer and supplier."

However, the first and foremost consideration, according to all manufacturers, is safety. This is particularly important because the equipment is designed for use by young children. "Our Playparks are built to encourage imagination and promote safety," said Holly Jackson of system designer and manufacturer Soft Play. "All play surfaces are rounded or padded to promote a safe play environment for children of all ages. All play areas are designed for easy parental monitoring. Domed windows, visibly open web crawls, and other design features assure children are virtually always in view."

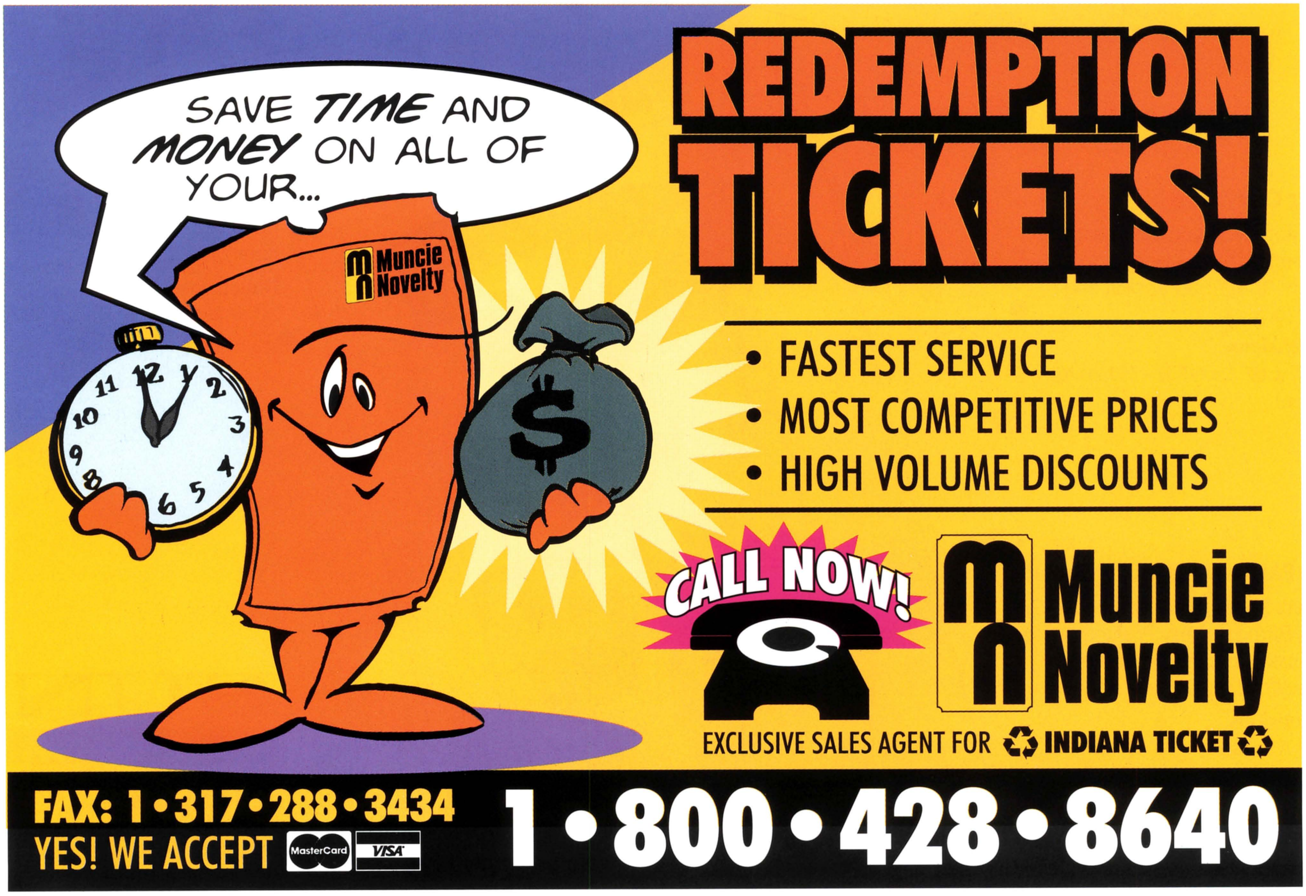
> ***"A play system's value depends on the amount of playable activities, not tubes."***

The only binding guidelines, according to Yanosik, are federal regulations that apply to outside playgrounds, which by their nature have more built-in potential liability. "Right now we go far beyond the regulations," he said. "Safety is always first, and we're setting our own standards."

Nevertheless, members of this essentially non-regulated industry often follow suggested guidelines set out by the Consumer Products Safety Council, as well as ASTM construction guidelines for materials and construction.

"Soft modular play structures have the best play safety record in history," said Pentes. "Operators are advised to carry liability insurance, monitor their units during operating hours, and to follow manufacturers' maintenance guidelines."

Other safety factors, Reed said,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also enhance the unit's attraction. For instance, quick exits for visits to the rest room, easy access to components like slides for rapid replay, and parallel attractions in which children can play side-by-side on activities of differing skill levels. "You don't want any child to be embarrassed," he elaborated. "This way you're embracing the safety and the play appeal."

Trends for the future

Although the concept behind modular play structures is based on the universality of children's play habits, the industry continues to forge ahead both in new markets and with new innovations in product development.

In the former category, the concept has spread beyond family entertainment center venues to a wide range of commercial locations including restaurants, bowling alleys, and even laundromats, automobile dealerships, and retail outlets.

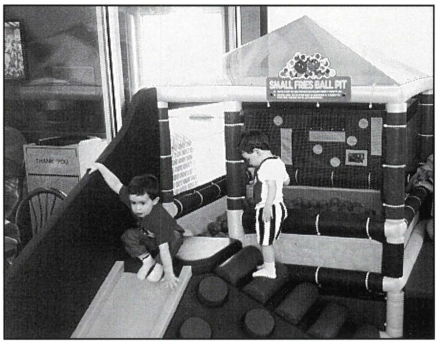
"You can add it on to broaden your appeal and increase foot traffic," explains Reed. "As more and more businesses capture this vision, we see tremendous growth potential at Little Tikes/Omni. We are going into Toys R Us stores as part of Jeepers that will create a whole new concept in shopping."

These bright spots in the domestic market in the United States notwithstanding, a number of manufacturers agree that the larger FEC market has softened. But Drummond said that smaller locations, around 8,000 square feet, are beginning to seek out more compact units for their facilities.

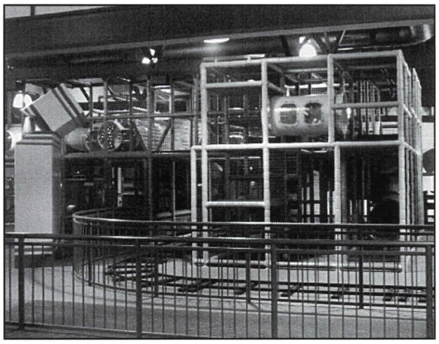
Foreign markets are also an increasingly lucrative market for modular play structures. "Often their facilities don't have the same types of budgets so they will try different things with their price structures," Yanosik noted.

"The market overseas is still very immature at this point," added Drummond. "The growth potential in Asia is almost as high as the American potential was five to seven years ago."

A well designed modular play system, like this one from Tunnels & Tubes, will generate repeat play.



Safety, including parental accessibility, are at the top of most manufacturers' priority lists.


Little Tikes/Omni encourages customers to place systems so they interact with other attractions like this kiddie train track.

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A large play structure from Little Tikes/Omni illustrates the use of such systems outdoors.

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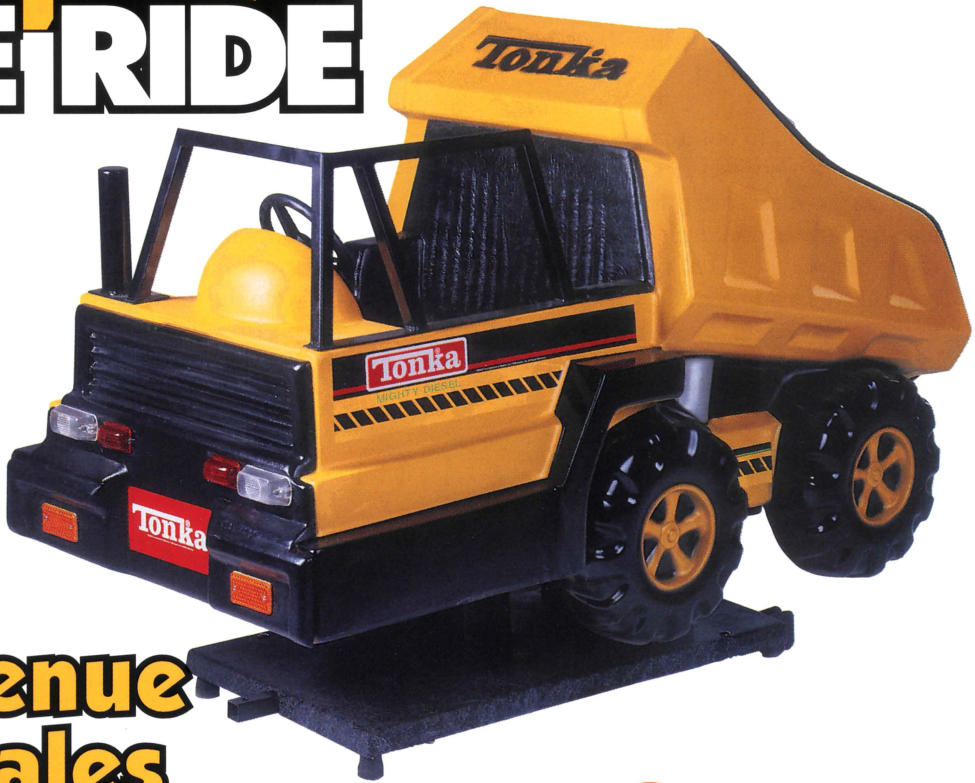
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Like much of the rest of the amusement industry, product innovation has also responded favorably to technological advances, incorporating sound and motion not previously available.

According to Reed, Little Tikes/Omni, which was recently acquired by Rubbermaid, has introduced two new products, Orbiter and a suspension bridge attraction which moves both sideways and up and down."With Orbiter, I can turn one of our spheres into a space capsule because we have basically doubled the size of our motion components in the last two months," he explained.

Yanosik said that some operators are also trying to combine structures having more built-in headroom with laser tag systems to capture a broader age market of children at different times of the day. "That might be a direction we're going but it's very hard to make that jump," he said.

Prime Play Systems has introduced 34-inch tubes into its new systems, providing 30 percent more space than traditional tubes. "This allows parents to easily move through the tubes and interact with their children," Drummond said. "Including the parents in activities lessens the need for quiet rooms and encourages them to return. Also the safety and ventilation is better."

> *"The growth potential in Asia is almost as high as the American potential five to seven years ago."*

This year Soft Play will introduce a number of innovative new products. The newest interactive component from the company is the Gyrocopter, which gives children the illusion of being in the cockpit of a high-tech aircraft. Mounted in the center of two freely moving rings, it can maneuver up and down and around by simply moving the joystick control. Soft Play will also introduce its new PowerPark series which addresses the concerns of international customers by addressing the concerns of low maintenance, low cost, and faster installation.

New play inventions from Pentes include its Ball Fall, The Ballcano, The Tank Shooting Gallery, and Float Ball, all of which feature falling, shooting, and flying ball attractions.

Such innovations, along with increased awareness of the market and a proliferation of manufacturers and product, are helping ensure the place of modular play structures in the entertainment location of today and tomorrow. ▲

Quick Reference

With the popularity of soft modular play systems increasing over the years, the number of companies manufacturing and supplying the equipment has grown as well. The following is a partial list of those businesses:

Ball Pit Services
P.O. Box 530
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Intertech
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Greensboro, NC 27405
(910)621-1891; fax (910)621-1893

Keiser Space Maze
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Fresno, CA 93706
(209)265-4770; fax (209)265-4780

Little Tikes/Omni
5611 N. Peck Road
Arcadia, CA 91006
(818)333-8830; fax (818)369-6557

Mapes Enterprises
5117 W. Waltann Lane
Glendale, AZ 85306
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Paris Play Designs
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Playpal
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Playspace Consultants
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Prime Play Systems
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Surrey, B.C., Canada V4N 4C1
(604)882-1808; fax (604)882-1804

Soft Play
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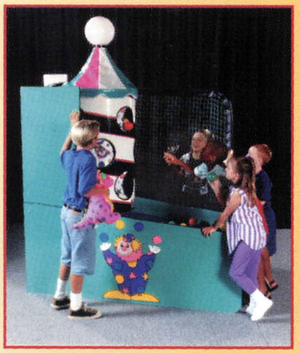
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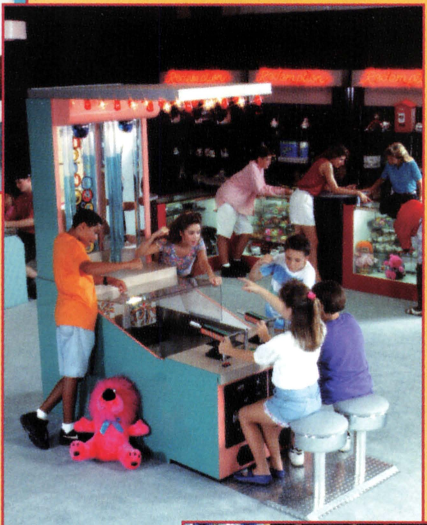
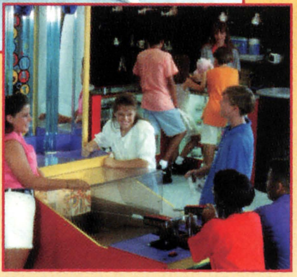
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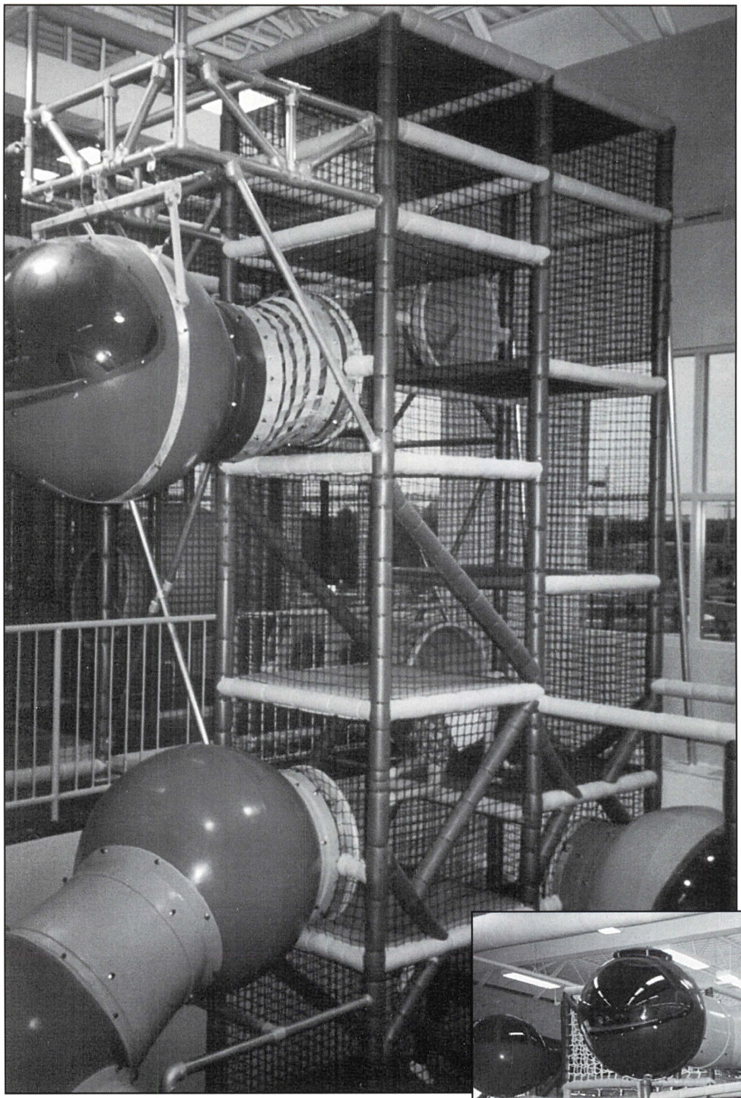
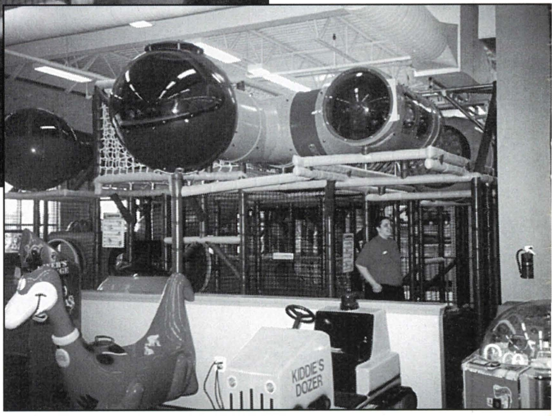


Left:
The four-level soft modular play unit at Planet Play in Reston, Va., drops down into a Burger King below.



Below:
Games and rides rim the short wall that separates the play zone from the rest of Planet Play in Reston, Va.

Gary Reedy of Planet Play in Burke, Va., knows how to pack megafun into minispaces at a family entertainment center that makes the most of its 8,500 square feet. He quips: "We have become masters at maximizing space. We put 10 pounds of sausage in a five-pound bag."

The Burke facility, which opened in November 1994, is one of four in northern Virginia that Reedy owns and operates with a partner. The other facilities are the Centreville Mini Golf & Games that opened 60 days after the Burke location, and Planet Play centers in Woodbridge and Reston (the newest).

The Burke and Woodbridge facilities are under the corporate umbrella of Amusement Unlimited; the Centreville site is under New Age Amusement, and the Reston center is under Reston Amusements.

Reedy lives by the credo: optimize space. And it's no wonder, since property in northern Virginia not far from bustling Washington, D.C., is at a premium.

"We need high ceilings," says Reedy, who prefers ceiling heights that measure 20 feet and above.

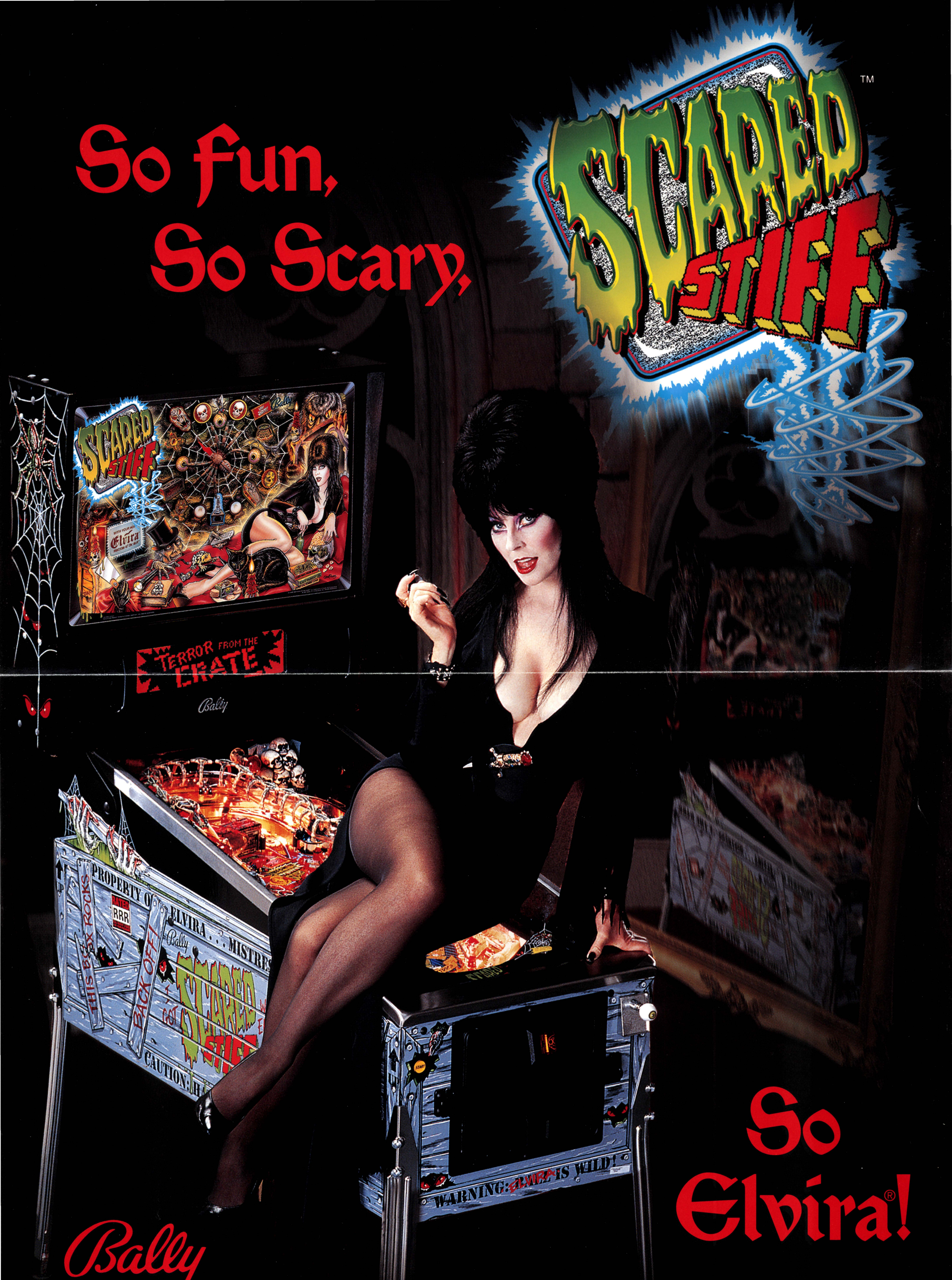
"People won't go upstairs to play games but they will go up there for parties," he explains. "It helps them get away from the other activities without closing off the party rooms." This philosophy led to the development of party mezzanines that separate festive party-goers from other customers.

According to Reedy, "Our biggest audience is the six- to 13-year-olds, but we get a lot of group outings and teenagers. Only 10 percent of our youngsters are six and under. We get the children who graduate from facilities that cater to the very young. And they don't go back because we have too many things to offer."

One of the key elements at Planet Play is the playground area. At the Burke location the soft modular play unit is from Playpal; at the new Reston site the unit is from Omni.

Reedy takes the non-traditional route with soft modular play units, stretching them up to four stories high. "We take up as little space on the ground as possible," he remarks. On the ground it occupies about 3,000 square feet but looks more like 12,000 square feet because it traverses the whole game room."

Reedy will be sharing his expertise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VITAL STATISTICS

Planet Play
Burke, Va.

Opened: November 1994

Size: 8,500 square feet

Employees: 25

Attractions: indoor playground, laser tag, game room with redemption, and party rooms.

Unique touches: party mezzanine, corporate events, laser tag parties, redemption ticket bank accounts and a redemption counter with prizes ranging from small toys to stereos to TVs.

Target audience: the entire family, especially six-year-olds on up.

at the Fun Expo as a panelist at two seminars: "Soft Modular Play Structures: Learning the Ropes," and "Merchandise Management: Controlling Profit and Loss."

He also applies his ideas on space economy to laser tag. "Our arenas are no bigger than 3,000 square feet," he says. (The range is from 1,600 square feet up to 3,000 square feet.) "We are not a stand-alone laser tag facility. When it is part of your whole repertoire you can get away with a smaller laser tag arena. We are not in the business to provide only laser tag."

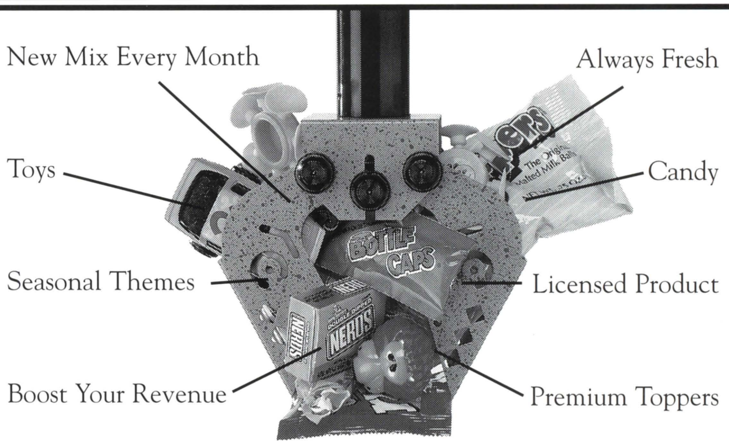
Reedy maximizes laser tag usage by hosting two parties at a time in the arena. He says that 25 percent of the laser tag players are walk-ins, the other 75 percent are from parties or group outings.

Also popular are corporate events where a company rents the entire facility. These are especially in demand at the Centreville location that has both indoor and outdoor playgrounds and miniature golf. Golf tournaments are part of the corporate package along with round robin laser tag tournaments. "Those customers have a great time for four hours," says Reedy.

The laser tag at the Burke location is from Laser Storm; at the Reston location it is from LazerTron. Reedy commented, "The size and scope of the laser tag depends on your market."

Reedy and his staff never consider a facility completely finished: "We are constantly tweaking. Every place we open we do something a little bit different. In the future we will only consider sites that allow for both outdoor and indoor attractions. I'm a firm believer that you have to have some outside activities. Indoor attractions alone can be scary. We have four months out of the year when our numbers are not good because we are exclusively indoors. We're doing great business where we have outdoor usage."

Reedy divulged that four new projects are in the works right now but none are finalized. "Hopefully by this time next year, or within 18 months, we will have at least six locations." ▲



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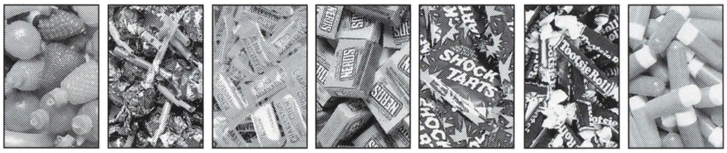

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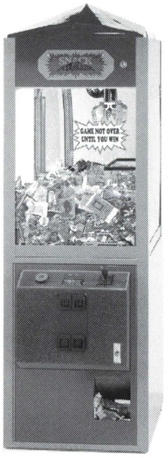

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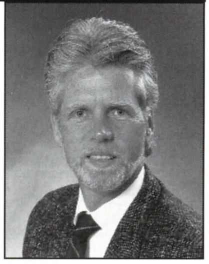


Q: Are soft modular play units a good investment?

STEVE McCAUL

A: If you are planning on opening a family entertainment center, and you are targeting the 11-year-old and under crowd, I recommend some type of soft modular play unit for your establishment. This is a great environment for younger children which is not only entertaining but also a form of healthy exercise.

Put yourself in a child's mind when he walks into an entertainment center. You see colorful slides, tubes, and a variety of mazes that challenge your coordination and creativity to conquer this play structure *again and again.*

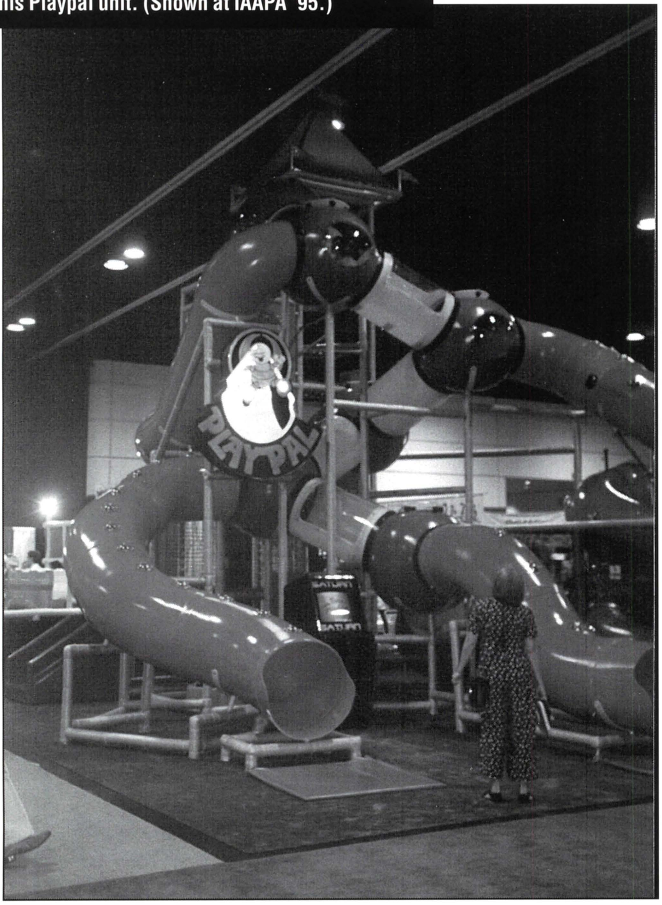
If you look right in your own neighborhood at the major fast-food chains, you will see new soft modular play units being constructed at a rapid pace. Many existing FECs are expanding, reworking, and enlarging their units to keep their appeal exciting.

However, what we all need to understand is that soft modular play cannot be the only source of income. This unit can be your main attraction, but you must also consider other entertainment venues along with it, such as a good game selection, well-stocked redemption prize counter, kiddie rides, birthday parties, a restaurant, or other activity.

To make your facility a good attraction, whether it's a bowling center, FEC, or pizza parlor, it must have many activities under one roof. Soft modular play should be only one of the many attractions you offer.

If you have decided to put soft modular play in your location, consider these two commonly-asked questions: "Should I charge for my unit," or "Should I offer my unit free as part of my total package since I'm already

An adult marvels at the challenge presented by this Playpal unit. (Shown at IAAPA '95.)



This triple-decker Ball Fall from Pentes multiplies fun. (Shown at Fun Expo '95.)

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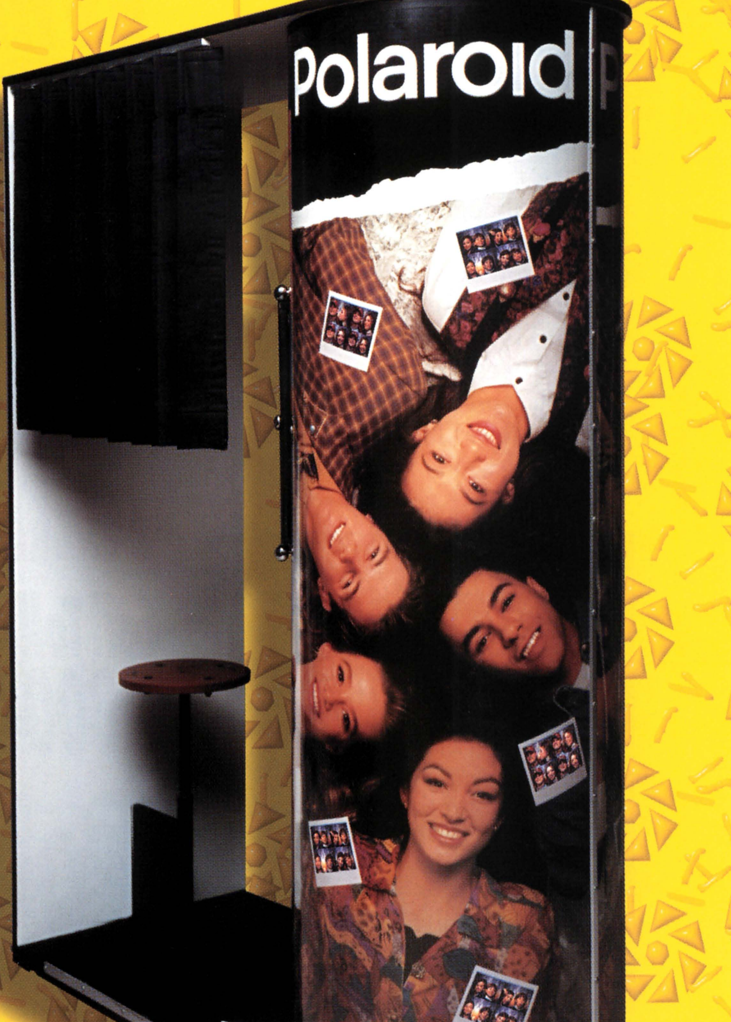

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The ultimate decision is yours. I'd like to share some actual scenarios and hopefully help you come to your own informed decision.

Case #1: A very successful FEC operator thought that a great attraction and enticement would be to give the soft modular play away free, thinking there were enough other attractions to produce a substantial income. After a few months, he realized that on busy weekends the parking lot was filled to capacity but the revenues didn't reflect this.

> ***"Soft modular play cannot be the only source of income. You must consider other entertainment venues to go along with it."***

What happened? The non-paying customers enjoying the free soft modular play were taking up valuable parking spaces that paying customers should have had available to them. The location decided to charge a small fee during the week for the use of the play unit, and increased the fee on weekends. This change was greeted with some complaints, but it was a wise business decision.

It was explained to the customers that the free play had been for promotional purposes and was for a limited time only. Overall, revenues increased for the entire operation of the FEC and continues to do so.

Case #2: Soft modular play can be *perceived* as being given away free in a restaurant atmosphere. However, to access the unit, the customer is enticed to use the restaurant first then approach the soft modular play. I've been told that this type of situation—when such play is added to a restaurant environment catering to young children—*substantially increases* sales for the restaurant and covers the cost of the *perceived free* play unit.

I have experienced many innovative ways to charge an entrance fee for soft modular play. For example, some people feel you should charge by time. This becomes a monitoring problem in tracking the children in and out of the unit.

The best way to handle this is to decide on one flat fee per child and tell them they have unlimited time in the play structure. This seems to work out the best because children do get tired and can't last more than 20 minutes or so in the unit.

The one price is perceived by the parent as a "great deal." At the same time, older siblings will be entertained and spend their money in other entertainment areas offered at your location.

One very important subject which is sometimes overlooked by the establishment (but not by the parents) is cleanliness. Whether large or small, soft modular play units must be kept *very clean.* The quickest way to lose a customer is to have their child experience a poorly maintained play environment. You want their visit to your location to be repeated many times. You want a clean and safe environment for children.

If you're in the market for a soft modular play unit, both new and used ones are available. We are still seeing a continued growth in population far greater than originally predicted. We will have a "kid market" for many years to come if we cater to this business correctly. ▲

Steve McCaul is a consultant and redemption specialist with his own company, Global Coin Equipment Exchange, in Kingston, Mass., (617)585-8600; fax (617)585-8399. He can also be reached on the Internet (global@pcix.com).

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Playground area BRIDGES THE GAP at Fun Station USA

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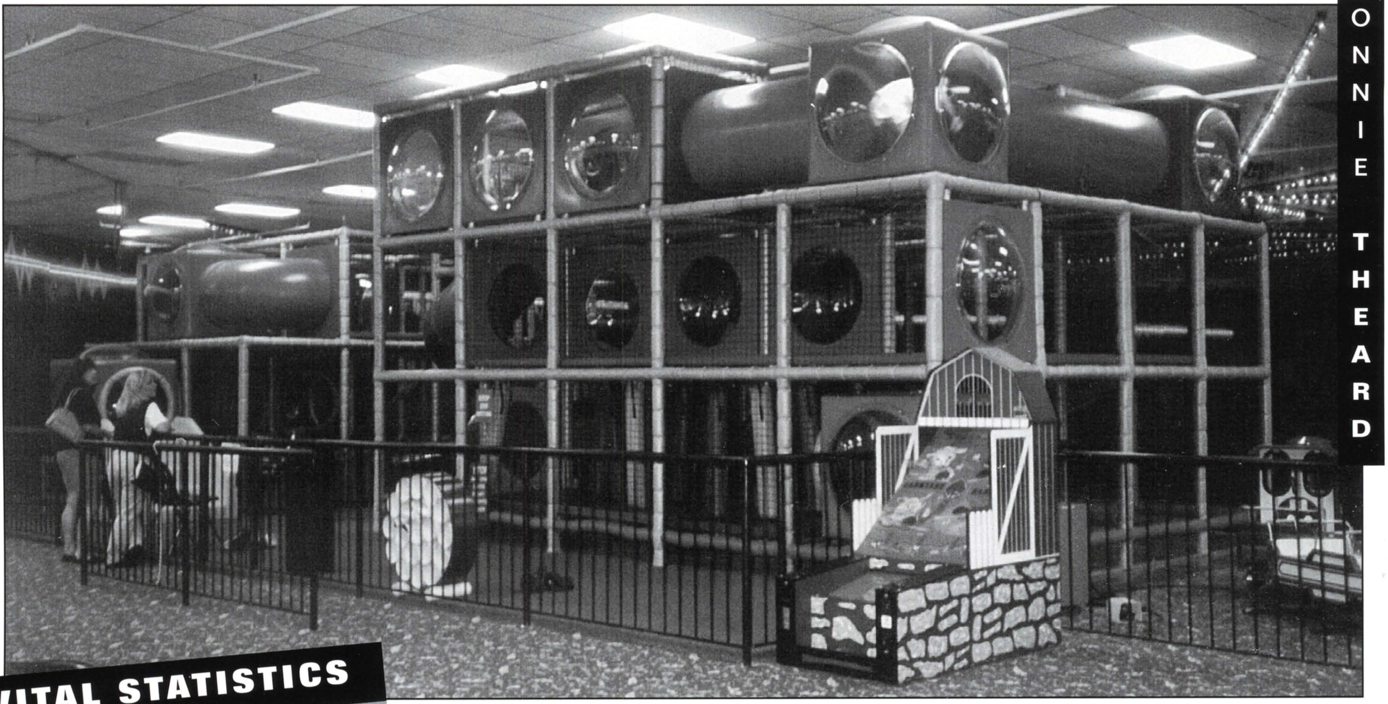

The tri-level soft activity zone at the Danbury Fun Station USA.

The International Association of Family Entertainment Centers calls them “soft activity zones.” Dorothy Lewis, general manager of Fun Station USA in Danbury, Conn., calls them entertainment areas that “bridge the gap” between the smaller customers and the bigger customers.

Lewis emphasizes that Fun Station USA caters to a clientele that ranges from toddlers to adults. The facility is located in a former warehouse that became a skating rink and evolved into Sportland America, an early family entertainment center that opened back in 1990 when FECs were a fairly new concept. It subsequently closed in August 1994.

According to Lewis, who was on the staff at Sportland, the facility focused mostly on skating and installed a soft modular play system late in the game. “It was added at the end and it should have been added sooner,” she said.

Once Fun Station USA took over the property, Lewis was able to rearrange the components of the three-tiered attraction and added a rope climb and trolley, to the great pleasure of customers. The entire structure is from Tunnels & Tubes.

Like all successful FECs, Fun Station USA changes attractions to meet the demands of its customer base and to keep a fresh look. The recent re-

VITAL STATISTICS

Fun Station USA
Danbury, Conn.
Opened: May 1995
Size: 24,000 square feet
Employees: 35
Attractions: laser tag, roller skating, soft modular play, carousel, birthday parties, and video and arcade games including redemption. The big redemption counter stocks everything from small rings to electronics; telephones and boom boxes are popular prizes.
Unique touches: laser leagues, “Mom and Me” program, birthday parties for adults.
Target audience: the entire family, from toddlers to adults.

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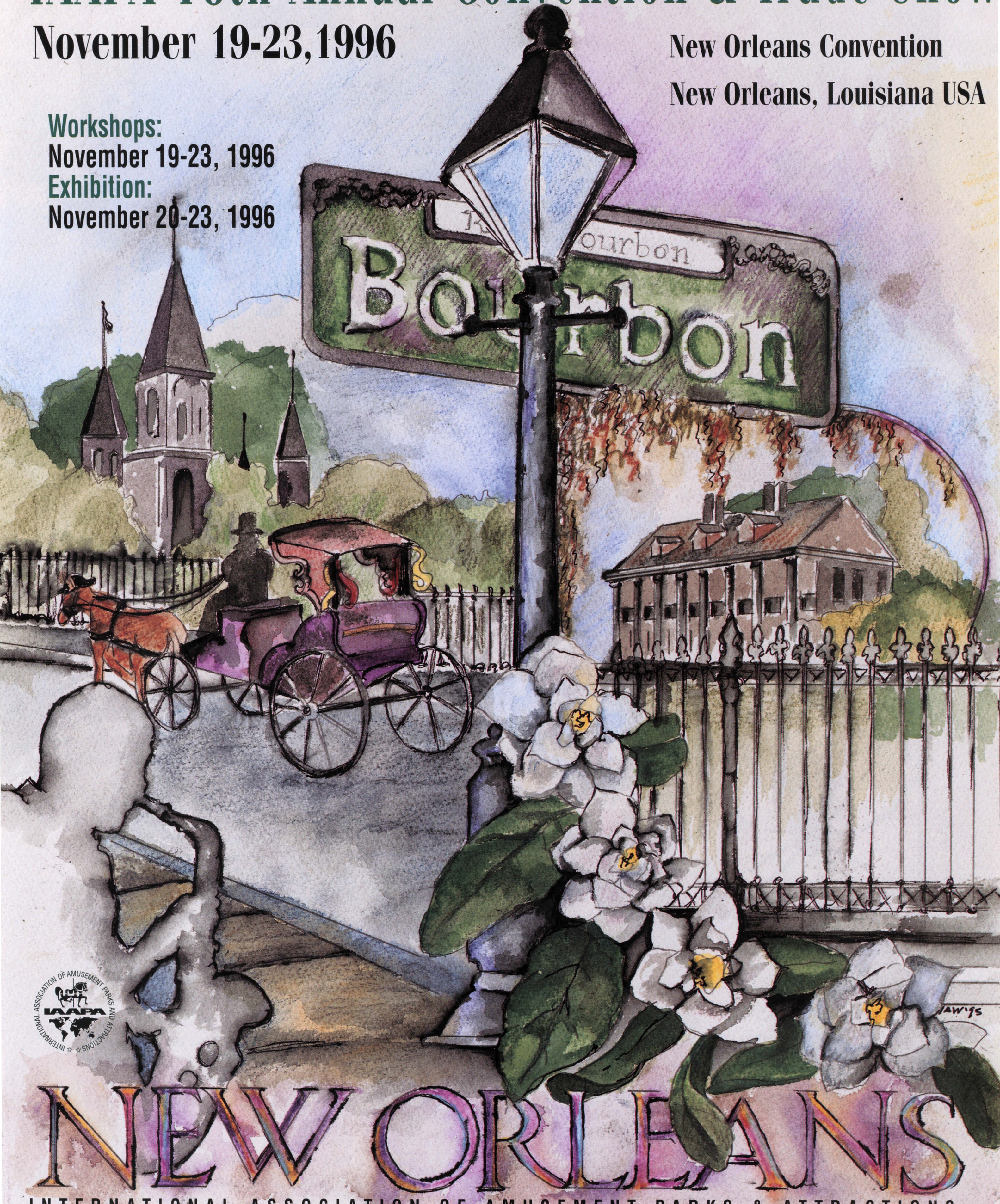

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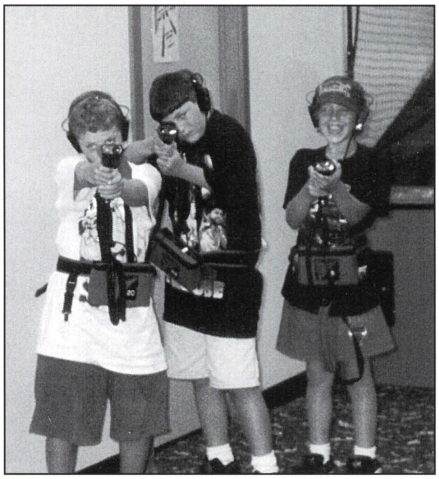
A typical birthday party includes games, the carousel, and time in the soft activity zone.



Ready, set, zap! Laser tag regulars suit up for action.

moval of a train ride will pave the way for such a change. Says Lewis: "We're hoping to extend our soft modular play system. That's what's on the drawing board. We're considering that possibility right now—a small ball pit and smaller slides for true toddlers."

She favors small children getting out and doing things instead of sitting in their strollers.

Lewis can appreciate the concerns of parents who frequent FECs. As the mother of both teenagers and a four-year-old, she knows what it's like trying to find a place where everyone can find something fun to do.

That's why she is enthusiastic about the "Mom and Me" program designed for preschoolers and their mothers on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. The package includes a free skating lesson, snack, a carousel ride, and time in the soft modular play system. The playground structure can accommodate both children and adults. Socks are required for all players. Fun Station USA sells socks for children and adults if needed for this area or for skating.

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In addition to the soft modular play system, Lewis considers the Laser Storm laser tag arena a "tremendous help" in catering to a diverse audience. Laser leagues (October through June) make it possible to capture and keep the interest of players. Corporate parties and tournaments also maximize the attraction's usage.

When asked if the center hosts birthday parties, Lewis responds: "Do we ever! We have five private party rooms with different packages that include soft modular play. We do parties for everyone from two-year-olds up to adults." It is not uncommon to see a 50th birthday party in progress.

Fun Station USA is also adding something new in the skating arena—hockey leagues for the winter.

The FEC enjoys good visibility from Interstate 84. It draws not only from Danbury's population (approximately 60,000) but from Westchester/Putnam County in New York as well. The Danbury site is one of four Fun Station USA locations; the others are in New York state (Lynbrook and Brentwood on Long Island, and Staten Island). ▲

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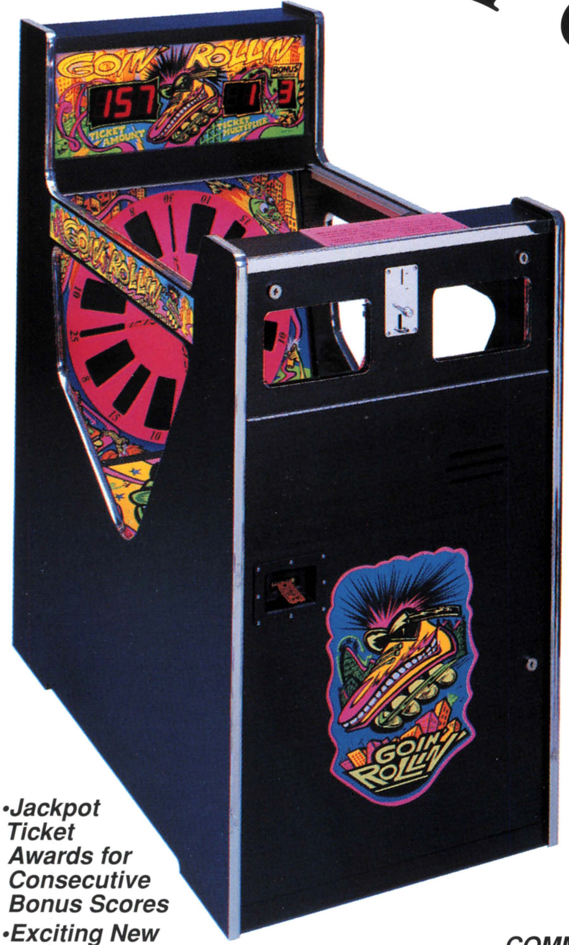
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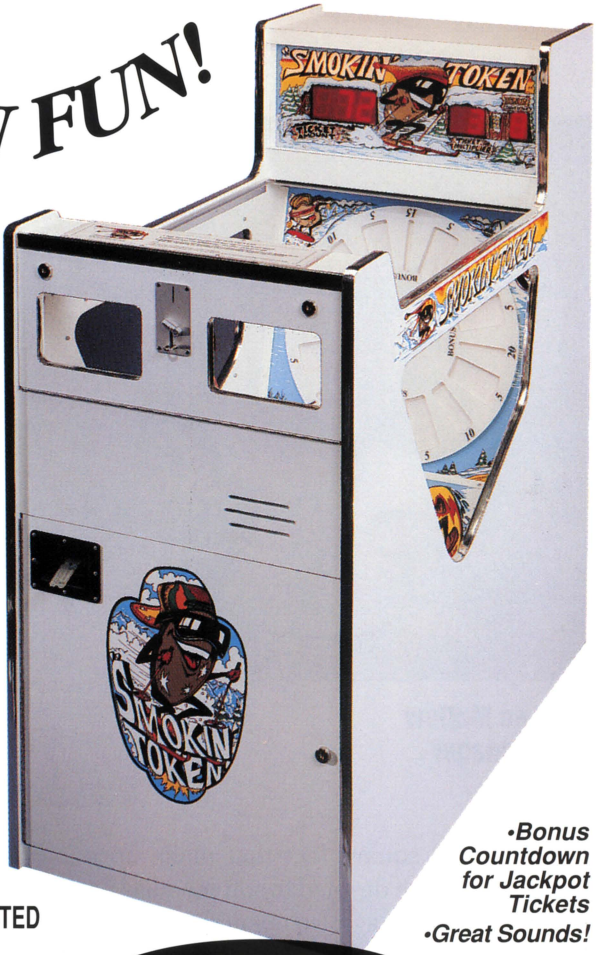
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Q&A

"Is soft modular play a vital part of your FEC?"

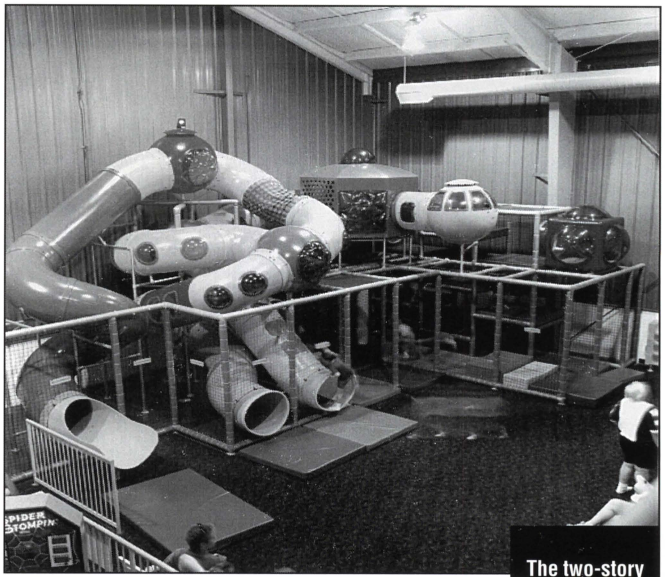
Happy youngsters in one of six ball pools at Playland.

Deanna Lee McDow
General Manager
Playland
SuiSun, Calif.

Of the 11,000 square feet that make up our FEC, 3,000 square feet are devoted to soft modular play. When we opened four years ago we opened as an indoor playground. Pricing is one fee for all you can play; parents play for free.

The playground area from Tenderfun includes an air bounce, maze, three-story spiral slide, monkey bars, and a trapeze. There are six ball pools, one each located under the monkey bars and the trapeze. We also have a train from Zamperla that goes around the play equipment. We have two sections of structures devoted to toddlers, along with mats and Lego toys. Our lounge is glassed on three sides; the soft modular play wraps around it.

We noticed that in order to survive we have to be more like a restaurant with soft modular play in it. We are going to change a little, adding more redemption games to our videos and kiddie rides and making the lounge more comfortable for parents. Beer and wine will be added to the menu, which features homemade pizza, a salad bar, nuggets and fries, nachos, cotton candy, and popcorn. In addition, we make our own birthday cakes.



The two-story play structure at Swings-N-Things.

Tim Sorge
Owner/operator
Swings-N-Things Family Fun Center
Olmsted, Ohio

Soft modular play is not the most important part of our facility but we need it, particularly in the winter months. It helps tremendously as another activity that can be included in birthday party packages. Being in the Cleveland area, we do a lot of birthday parties in the winter. You get more families to come to your facility with an activity for the youngest member of the family.

This attraction, added in 1994 and designed by Omni, is for children from four years old to 10 (priced at $2.99 for unlimited play). It stands two stories high and is part of our 15,000-square-foot game room. We also have a toddler's corner for children three years old and under (priced at $1.99 for unlimited play) that includes a small ball pit. We insist that parents stay with these youngsters.

For security reasons the play structure is in a visible spot at the back of the facility with a wrought iron fence around it. Children are issued a wrist band and gain access through a locked gate. An attendant is always on duty and makes sure children leave with their adult guardian.

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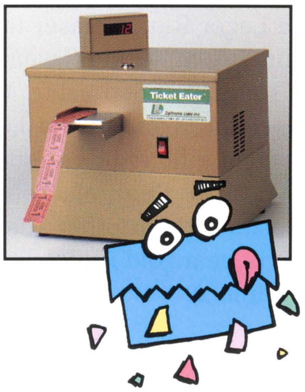

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If all you have are indoor activities, soft modular play systems are a good investment because you are limited in the number of things you can do indoors. But we learned a long time ago that in the spring and summer families want to be outside. Kids are out of school, families do more things together, and there is daylight-saving time—all working in favor of outdoor activities.

And, today families are looking for diversity. We started small in 1987 and stuck with our master plan. Our other activities, situated on 13 acres, include two 18-hole miniature golf courses, large bumper boat pond, two go-kart tracks, game room with 80 to 90 pieces (mostly redemption), nine-station batting range, kiddie park with six rides, ice cream shoppe, and picnic area with a covered pavilion that seats 300.

The Toddler Play Place at Fun Challenge.

Chuck Jones
Owner/operator
Fun Challenge
Christiansburg, Va.

We're expecting the busiest times for our soft modular play to be the fall and winter, although it has been really good so far. We opened this spring after a hard winter. The summer was somewhat wet which brought more people indoors. We got a lot of camp and church groups because of that.

Our main soft modular play area occupies 1,500 square feet of our total 20,000-square-foot fun center. It was designed by Soft Play and includes a 16-1/2-foot spiral slide, ball pit, fun forest, club house, crawl tubes, air bounce, and rope walk.

In addition, we have a separate 1,000-square-foot area for toddlers with a ball pit from Soft Play, a small air bounce from Wapello, and a modular play unit from Kid's Play. We supplement that area with different geometrical soft shapes and building blocks. The carpet has extra padding underneath for protection, plus it's softer for parents who sit down on the floor with their children. A four-foot six-inch wall surrounds the area. A section with games runs between the two play areas which helps with traffic flow and keeps the older children separated from the younger ones.

Our food service area is right next to the soft modular play equipment. Parents can see all the way to the other end of the building if need be. Pricing is $3 for children four years old and under (unlimited play) and $5.25 for those over four years old (unlimited play).

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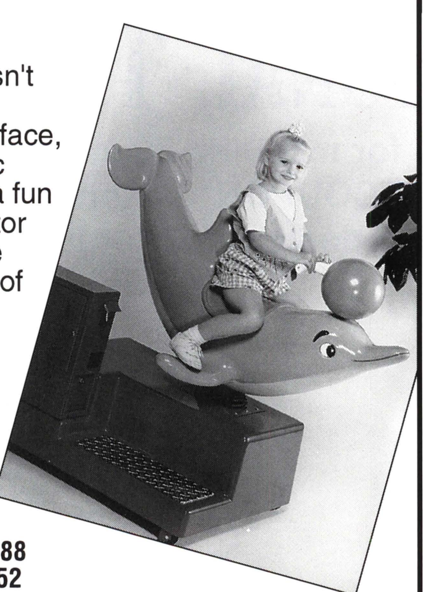

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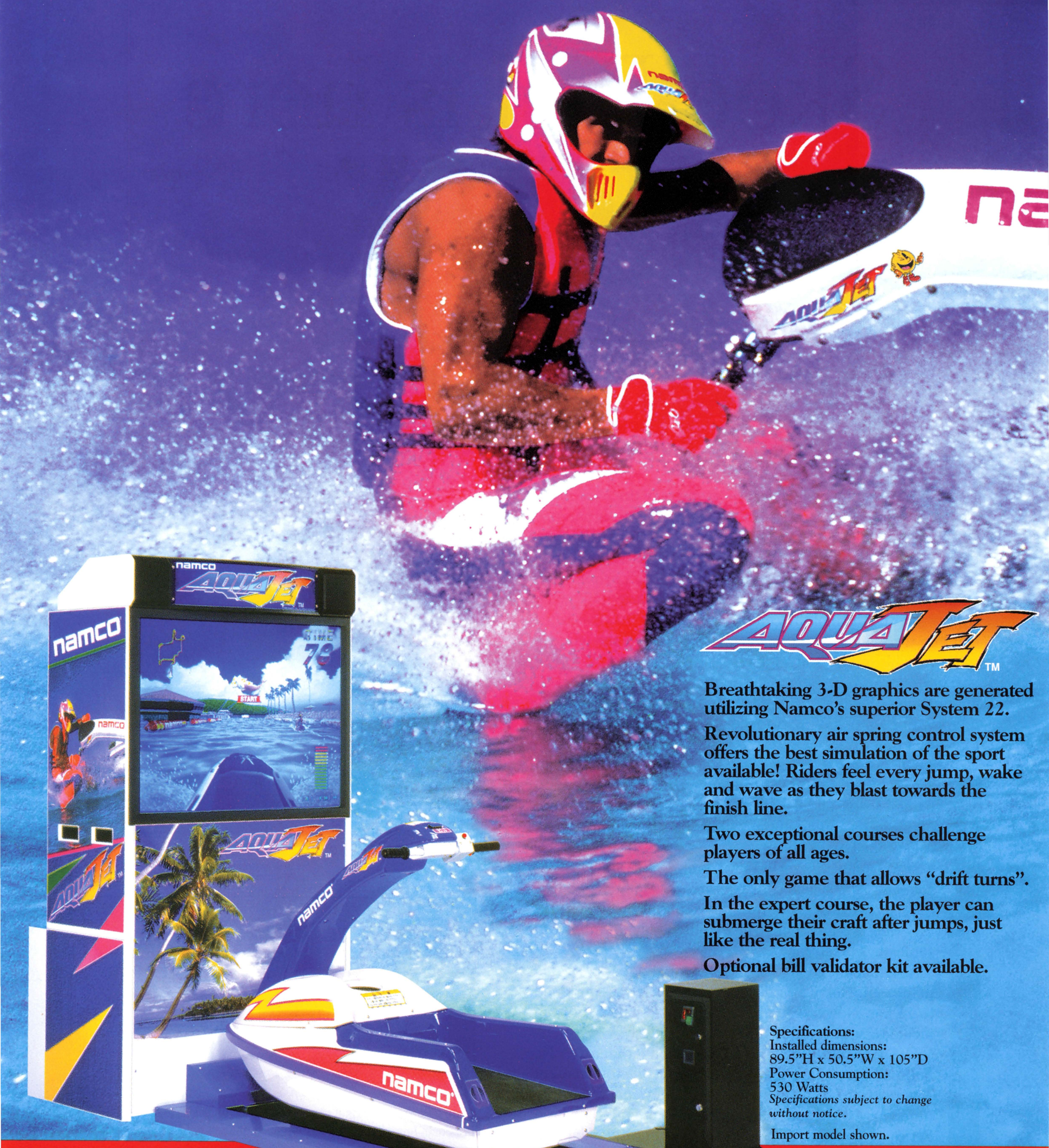

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Skee-Ball is here TODAY and here TOMORROW

VALERIE COGNEVICH

"Mommy, mommy, pleeeeaaase let me play the *Skee-Ball*," pleads the youngster as he strolls the midway with his parents. Of course, the folks give in to please the child, and he happily begins tossing the balls into the circles for a high score.

It's a scene repeated over and over in FECs around the country. The difference is that the above scenario took place shortly after the turn of the century! Yes, nearly 90 years after children were first treated to a game of *Skee-Ball*, the game is still irresistible to kids and adults.

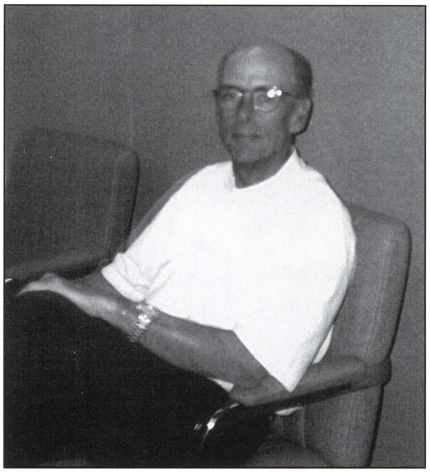
The folks at *Skee-Ball* describe its legendary product as an amusement game of simple skills and rewards. It refuses to go out of style, having transcended generations to stand the test of time.

The history of the *Skee-Ball* alley can be traced back to 1909 when a young Princeton University graduate named Jonathan Dickonson Estes fashioned wood from his father's Philadelphia lumberyard into a game he called Box Ball.

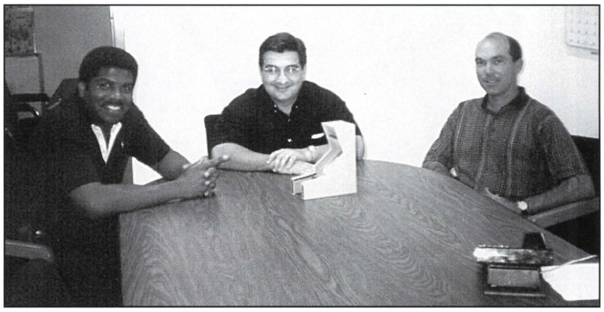
In 1914 during World War I, Maurice Peisen who had roots in Coney Island distributed the game (renamed *Skee-Ball*) to the outdoor amusement industry. The alleys were 36-feet long, which limited play to those with some physical strength.

A significant change in 1928 would endear *Skee-Ball* to the entire family for decades to come: it was shortened to 14 feet. Now it could be enjoyed by just about anyone including women, kids, and even the elderly.

The game attracted such a following after an extensive national promotion that the first *Skee-Ball* tournament was held in Atlantic City in 1932. Newspapers of the time, busy with stories about Babe Ruth and the World Series, economic hard times, and a new presidential candidate named Franklin Delano Roosevelt, still found space for coverage of the event. Said an article in the *Atlantic City Press*: "While the Depression gripped the



President Joe Sladek bought Skee-Ball in 1984.



From left: Vice president of sales Reggie Moultrie, executive vice president Mark Kane, and operations manager Jeff Hudson.

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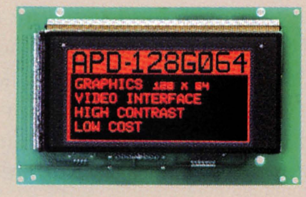
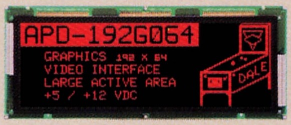
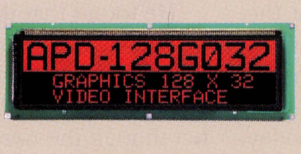
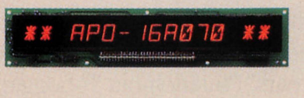

APD-128G064
GRAPHICS 128 X 64
VIDEO INTERFACE
HIGH CONTRAST
LOW COST


APD-192G064
GRAPHICS 192 X 64
VIDEO INTERFACE
LARGE ACTIVE AREA
+5 / +12 VDC
DALE


APD-128G032
GRAPHICS 128 X 32
VIDEO INTERFACE



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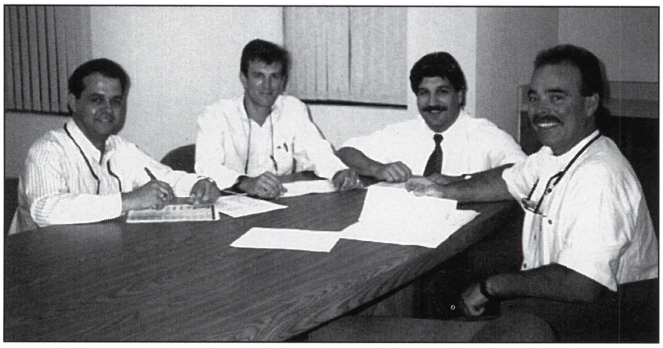
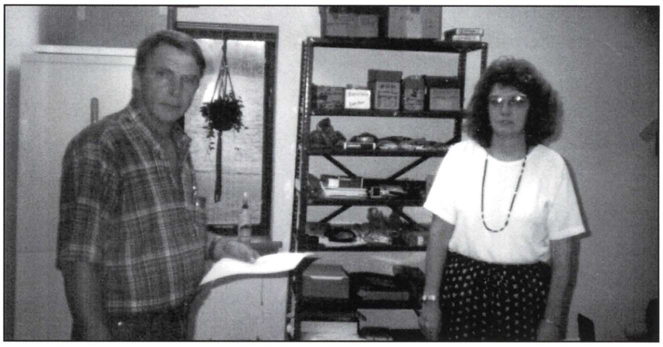


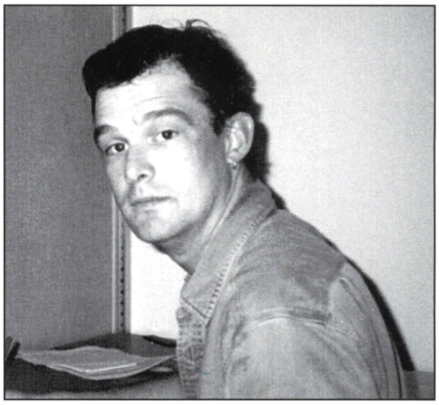
From left: Creative director Gary Whitten, general manager Steve Rice, sales manager Tom Kane, and engineering manager Alec Sprouse.



Bill Bing (plant manager) and Maureen Sullivan (purchasing manager).

Shipping and receiving manager Dan Packowski.

Accounts payable/receptionist Betty Scalpone.



Production supervisor Chris Harris.

country, spirits stayed high at the seashore. Laurel and Hardy were cavorting on local movie screens as arcade enthusiasts watched the weekend *Skee-Ball* tourney."

The popularity of the *Skee-Ball* alley drew the attention of the Rudolph Wurlitzer Co., known worldwide for its pianos and organs, and the company secured the rights from Piesen. The game was displayed at the 1939 Chicago World's Fair under the name Skee-Roll and gained nationwide prominence as it became popular in larger midwest cities. Skee-Rolls were soon visiting neighborhoods beyond the big cities as portable units turned up in carnivals and on amusement trailers.

In 1945 the Philadelphia Toboggan Co. (a local company with deep amusement roots manufacturing carousels and amusement rides) purchased the *Skee-Ball* patent and trademark from Wurlitzer. Philadelphia Toboggan maintained the rights to the product for over 40 years. Philadelphia Toboggan today builds custom wooden roller coasters for amusements parks worldwide.

During the Philadelphia Toboggan days the *Skee-Ball* alley underwent some significant changes: a winner light fixture in 1956 showed the winning score; in 1967 an automatic ticket dispenser was added; the conversion from mechanical operation to electronic was completed in 1974; and in 1981 audio made its debut.

In 1984 Philadelphia Toboggan sold the company to Joe Sladek, who still functions as the company president today.

Sladek had been working in New York as vice president of finance for a publishing company. He says that one day he woke up and decided then and there he didn't want to work for anyone anymore and began the search for a company that would "make me happy," he said.

He found that dream in Skee-Ball in 1984. Over the past 12 years, the company has successfully evolved and expanded beyond the scope of one product though the *Skee-Ball* alley remains the cornerstone of the business.

With *Skee-Ball*'s history, it would be easy to rest on the past success and take it for granted. But that's precisely what Sladek has vowed not to do. "Although we have maintained a quality product, we know that there is enough competition in the redemption field that we can't take our position for granted. We will continue to see *Skee-Ball* evolve from a technological standpoint, utilizing state-of-the-art technology. I liken it to the old covered wagon and the brand new Mercedes. Both will get you where you're going, but how would you rather travel?"

Five years ago, Joe concluded that in order for Skee-Ball to step up to the 21st century the company would have to expand its horizons and broaden the product line. Sladek explains that when he was presented with the opportunity of buying National Sports Games, he couldn't believe his luck. "I knew it was the answer to achieving our goal. It was a prime manufacturer within our industry and once offered, I ran with it."

He added that the purchase of National Sports Games not only broad-

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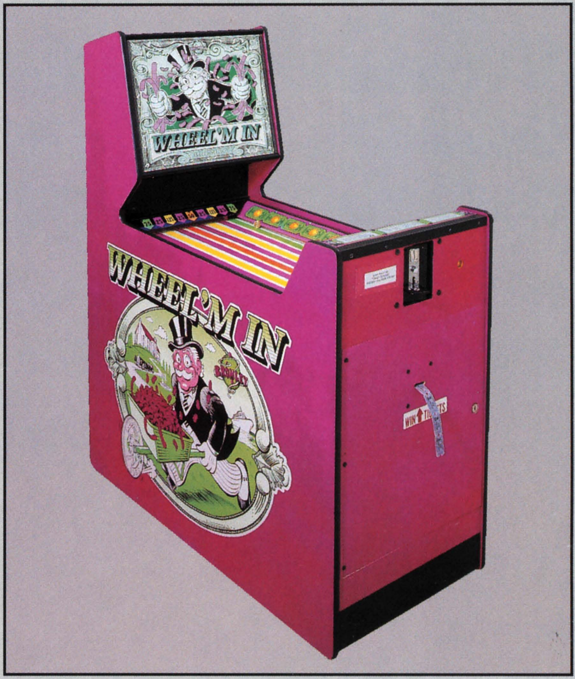
Dimensions:
W=22 1/8"
H=57 1/4"
L=47"
WT= 284 LB


WHEEL'M IN
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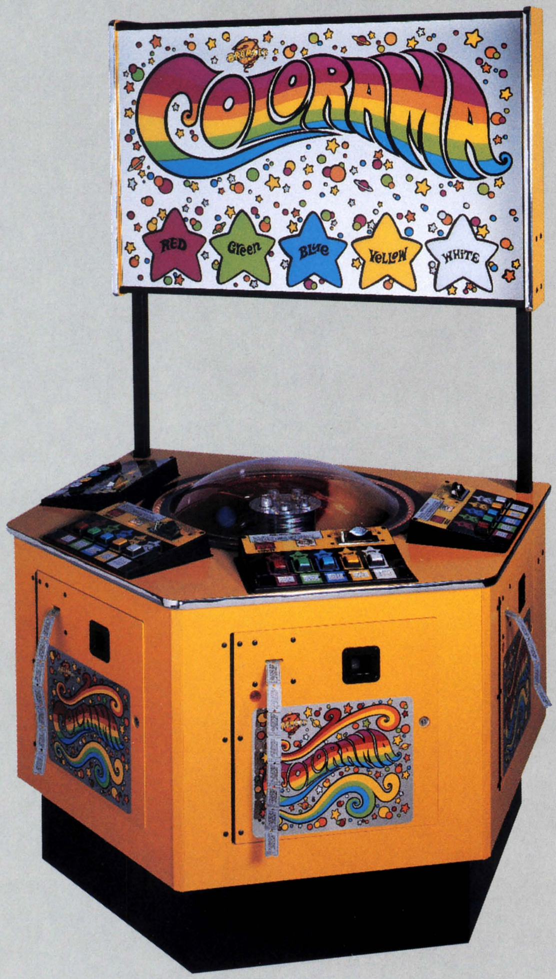
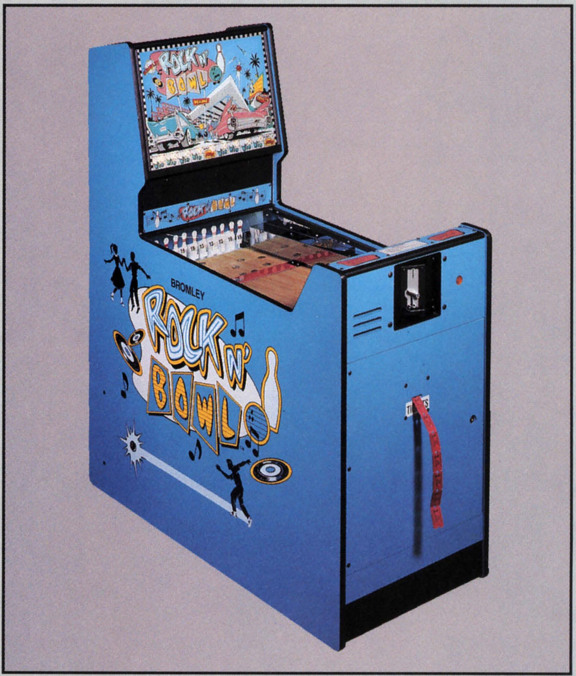
Wheel 'm In


COLORAMA
RED
Green
Blue
Yellow
WHITE
COLORAMA
COLORAMA

Dimensions:
W=48"
H=77/89" MAX
L=44"
WT= 420 LB

Colorama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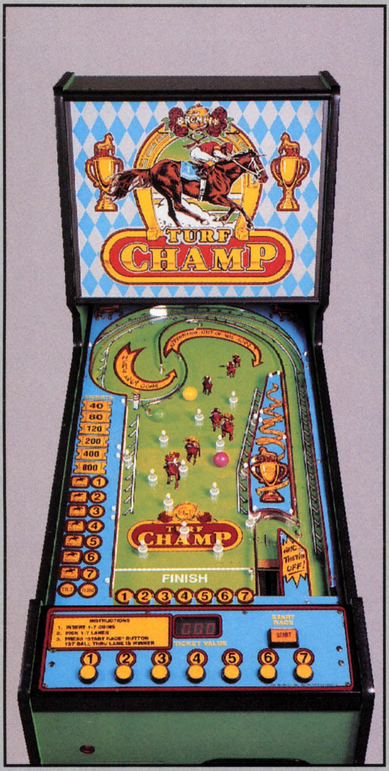

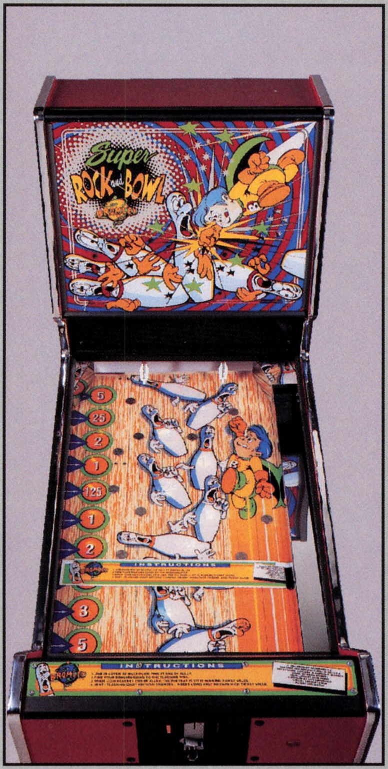

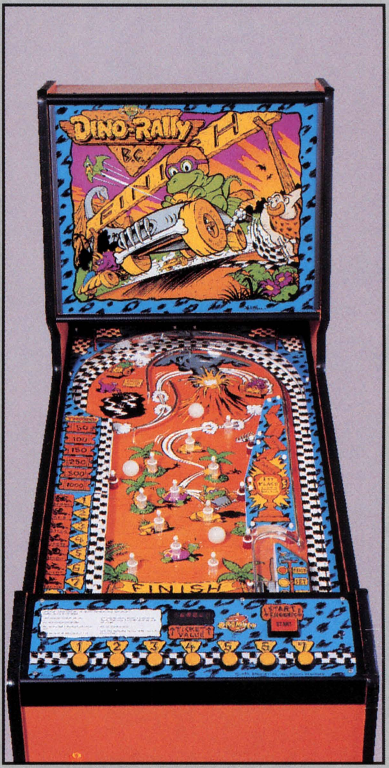

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- Deltronic ticket dispenser
- Winner every time
- High grade cabinet
- BSMT 2000 sound chip

22 1/8"-57 1/4"-47"
WT= 235 LB

DINO-RALLY

- Kid lovin graphics!
- Dino-mite earnings
- Low ticket light
- Solid State Electronics
- High grade cabinet
- Easy ticket adjustment
- Automatic ticket count display board

1-7 coins, pick your "Dino" & press start!
7 coins can be played at one time!
22 1/8"-57 1/4"-47"
WT= 217 LB

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FAX 847.427.9471

Shipping supervisor Mike Hernandez.

ened the company's product line, it also gave Skee-Ball a sales office near the West Coast and expanded the production capabilities. "Since National Sports Games was already building games with the same philosophy of fun and quality, I knew it would be a good match."

All of Skee-Ball's impressive product line were built under the philosophy that has kept the Skee-Ball alley fresh: fun, quality, and profitability for its customers. Those products include *Skee-Ball* Classic in a variety of styles like four-player, portable, mini, and upgrade kits; *Skee-Ball Too!* with upgraded electronics; *Skee-Ball Lightning*, in a bold color scheme; and for little folks the *Skee-Daddle.*

In the sports line there are *Super Shot Jr.*, kiddie basketball at its best; *Hightops,* a basketball game played in a giant fiberglass basketball show; *UB QB II*, a football challenge with bold new graphics and colors and a prize dispenser option; and the world-wide popular full-size basketball game *Super Shot,* with a moving backboard and linkability feature.

In redemption Skee-Ball offers *Sittin' Ducks*, with a whimsical colorful cartoon duck pond and an easy load shooter that holds multiple coins; *Circus Hi Rise*, with colorful traveling lights; *Killer Beez*, a new type of group race game; and O*peration Vortex*, a group race game with a space theme utilizing *Skee-Ball's* popular ball shooting concept.

Fitting securely into Skee-Ball's philosophy on how to make great games is working and listening to their customers. One example is changing from a nine-ball rocker system to the single ball system. Sladek explains: "In the early days the system required that all nine balls be present for the game to start. We had customers complaining that too many times one ball would be missing and it would lock up the system. As a direct result of our customer's suggestion, we developed the single ball system. We are very proud of it."

Another thing that makes Skee-Ball what it is today is the service after the sale. "We have one of, if not the most, aggressive warranty policy in the industry. We have a full one-year warranty on all of our electronics. I'd be surprised if you see other companies doing that. In addition, we have a full service staff and a full parts inventory in both our Pennsylvania and Phoenix offices."

The *Operation Vortex* assembly.

Skee-Ball, with a 40,000-square-foot facility in Pennsylvania and a 38,000-square-foot complex in Phoenix, employs about 90 people. The management team includes Sladek's right hand man, executive vice president Mark Kane. He came from an operational background, spending 12 years with Six Flags before joining VariTech as operational consultant and working his way up the ranks to vice president and general manager. He joined Skee-Ball with its purchase of VariTech in 1992.

Also making the transition from VariTech to Skee-Ball was vice president of sales Reggie Moultrie. He handles eastern distribution, national accounts, Mexico, Central and South America, and the Middle East.

Thomas Kane, sales manager and Mark's brother, heads the Phoenix sales office and works the western distribution, the Pacific Rim, and Australia.

Operations manager Jeff Hudson, also a former Six Flags employee, works with amusement parks and in European sales.

With the success that Skee-Ball has enjoyed for many years, especially for the past 12, we asked Sladek how he now views the industry he's made his home. Here's what he had to say:

"The industry is very confused. We are going through a cycle like we have done many times in the past. It's only a matter of time before the weak will be eliminated through a shakeout and the strong will survive and the industry will be back on its feet again.

He continued, "The industry suffered from extreme overexposure. Lawyers, doctors, and others wanted to become part of this business and did things in a big way. They didn't follow the tried and true steps and as a result many didn't make it. As they left the industry it left a shake out that went all the way from the top to the bottom. All will rectify itself in time."

Mark Kane agreed: "I keep thinking back to ACME '94. We counted over 30 redemption manufacturers with redemption games where just a few years before there were only about five or six. How many manufacturers and operators can the industry absorb? Like every other business there must be a leveling off after a peak.

"These are tough times and sometimes it's easier to feel sorry for yourself than to do something about it. I only have one thing to add: think smarter, work harder, take care of your customers, and these tough times are survivable." ▲

The *Super Shot* assembly.

PRODUCT
INTRODUCTION

Nolan Bushnell shows he hasn't LOST HIS TOUCH

VALERIE COGNEVICH

Brian Duke chats with the Siebens, (l-r): Leah, Vicki, and Michal of M.H. Associates.

Nolan Bushnell, creater of *Pong,* founder of Atari, and genius behind the Chuck E. Cheese concept is back in the coin-op industry with a new, revolutionary concept and a company named Aristo. Nearly 40 distributors traveled to San Francisco to hear more about it.

Nolan Bushnell could very well have been the inspiration for the line made famous in the movie Field of Dreams: "If you build it they will come." Of course, his idea is much more than a baseball diamond but will require a lot of faith in the idea and the concept to make it work.

Bushnell, along with vice president of sales and marketing Bill Cravens, made a convincing, eloquent speech about the industry's sluggish state and its future if things don't change.

Bushnell dotted his presentation with the words "fun" and "party." His concept, he told the audience, was not only about games, it was about setting up an infrastructure for a world wide party on the Internet. He explained that Aristo is an entertainment company, not a game company.

"Aristo is introducing network entertainment systems that will connect people in unique ways," Bushnell advised his audience.

Bushnell's view of the industry is not taken lightly, presumedly because he is often referred to as the father of video and with *Pong* brought the coin-op industry to a height perhaps never thought possible. He told distributors that the industry has gone up, down, up, down, and has been problematic in the past 25 years. He said, "Games are too expensive, they are too complex, they are old fashioned, and the player base is too narrow."

Bushnell takes a step back from the raging technology that manufacturers have perceived as the answer to the dwindling coin-op market. "Bigger, faster, better is not necessarily the answer to producing product that players will play.´ The premise, in fact, is certain to create games players won't play."

Bushnell called the coin-op industry a shadow business,and it's not a compliment, as he explained: "In the '70s our industry was newsworthy. You'd pick up the newspaper or turn on the television and there we were. We'd never been in the public eye before. We are not newsworthy anymore and that's the tragedy. We don't want to be an invisable industry."

Surprisingly, while the industry has made mammoth efforts to support legislation for a dollar coin, Bushnell refutes those efforts claiming that passage of a dollar coin could very well be the last nail in the industry's coffin. He maintains that charging players more for entertainment is not the answer. In fact, he quotes the Boston School of Pricing that claims if you decrease the price 22 percent you can actually double the income.

"Our goal," Bushnell emphasises, "is to pull people off of bar stools not across town into malls. We're seeing companies dwelling on raising the price per play to justify the enormous expense of making games. There's something terribly wrong with this."

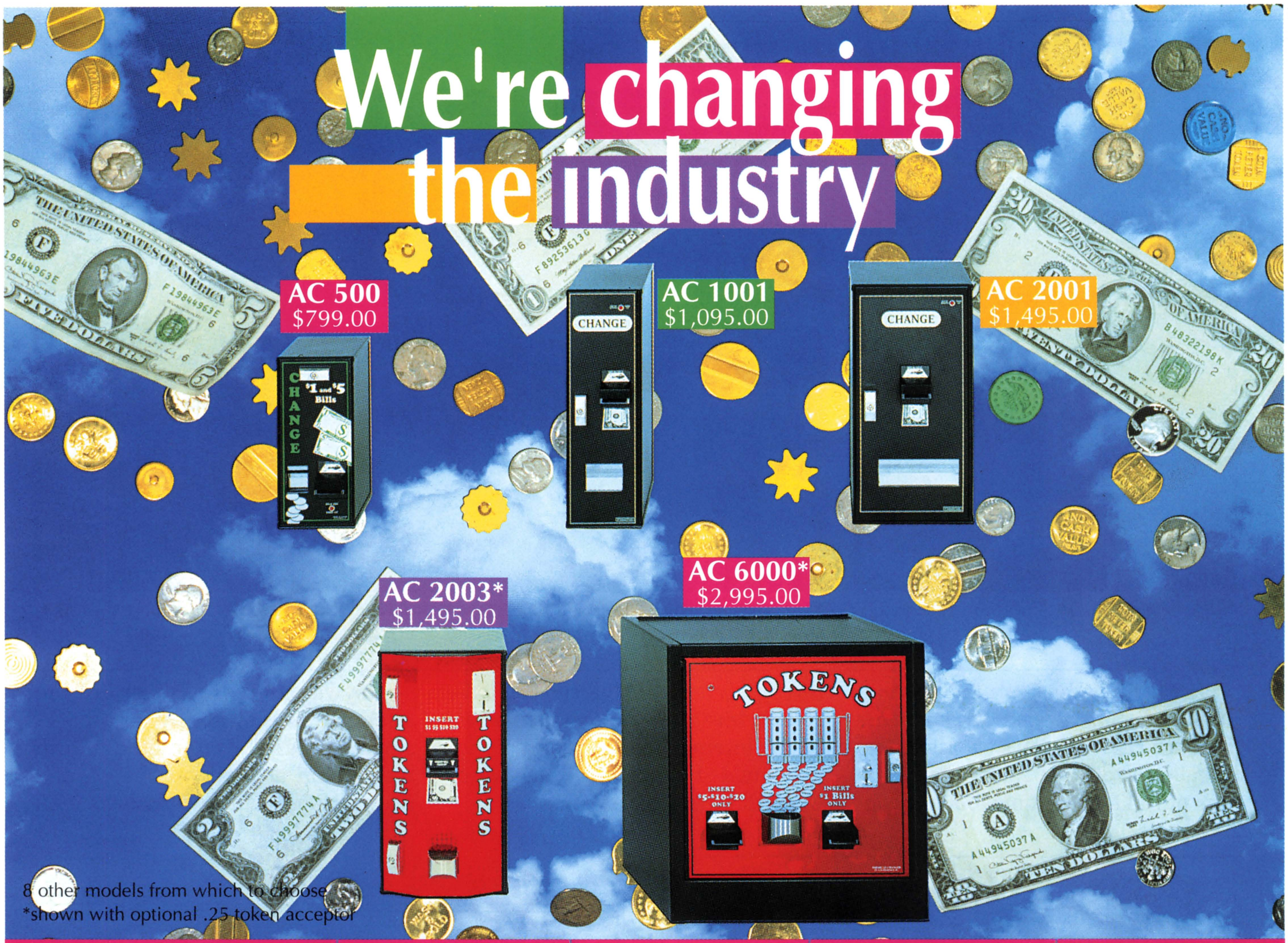
It was with this view of the current coin-op industry that Bushnell presented what Cravens called the biggest advance the industry has seen.

The concept

Bushnell predicts that with the Aristo products and the world wide infrastructure he mentioned earlier, the industry could increase from its current $6.8 coin drop to a whopping $22 million.

Bushnell's plan for accomplishing this daunting feat is utilizing the Internet, which he claims is growing at a rate of two percent per month. "The industry will lose out if it doesn't take advantage of a networking system like the Internet now. If we don't, the Bell companies or cable will take it over."

Cravens agreed, adding that Bell doesn't need the industry. "They have their own access and will put it to use."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Payouts	hopper loaded quarter or token	hopper loaded, quarter nickel, dime or token	dual hopper optional .25 token acceptor	dual hopper optional .25 token acceptor
$1 Coin Payout	yes with a kit	yes	yes	yes
Validator Acceptance	$1,$2,$5, $10	$1, $2,$5,$10,$20	$1, $2, $5, $10, $20	$1, $2, $5, $10, $20
Validator Interchangeability	no	yes	yes	no
Token Bonus Payout	no	yes	128 options	128 options
Base and Header Kits	yes	yes	yes	base only
*Rear Loaders	no	yes	yes	no
Options Fronts	no	change or tokens	change or tokens	change or tokens
Optional Alarm System	yes	yes	yes	yes

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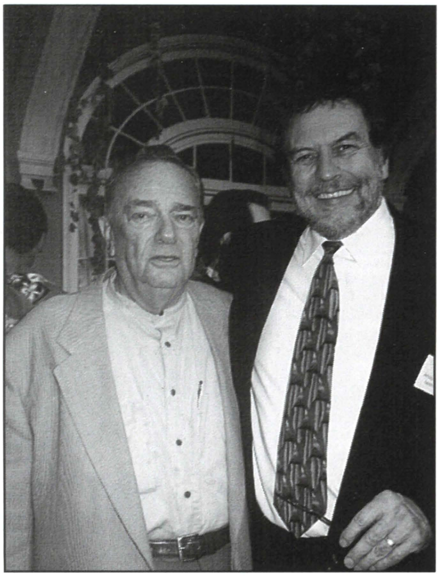
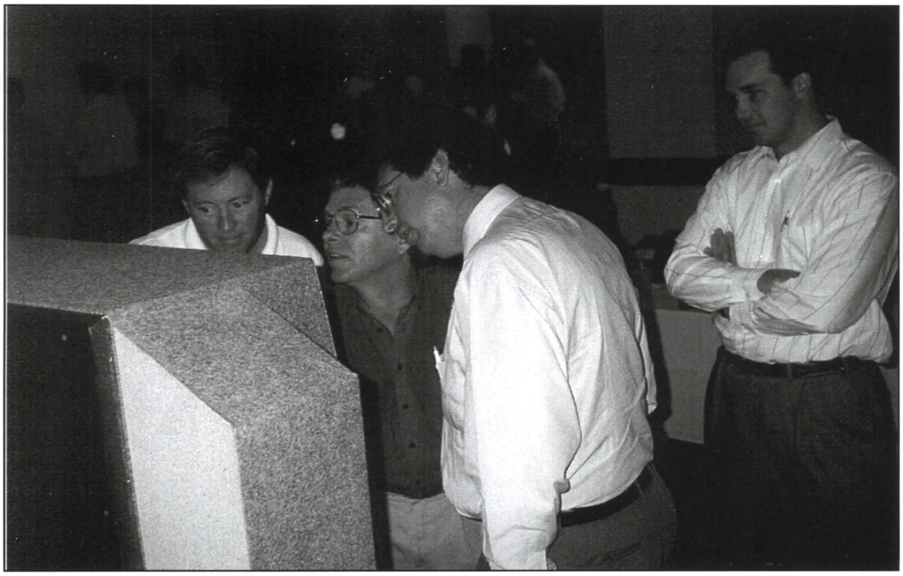


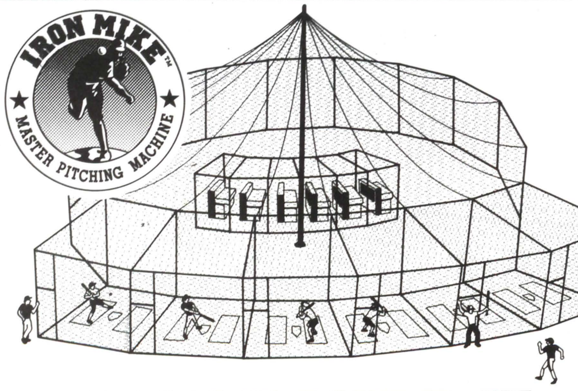
Pioneer's Joel Kleiman (l) with Nolan Bushnell.



Scott Sammons (Game Sales), Jim Niblock (Canadian Coin Machine), and Mark Haim (Belam) taking a close look at the "Robot Head" *Musicnet* machine. Matt Davison of American Coin looks on.

Cravens cited a story that demonstrates how intertwined kids are in the Internet. His son Ryan's favorite group is called Crackers. After Ryan, who was only 17 at the time, bought concert tickets he found out you had to be at least 18to attend. Undaunted he got on the Internet and expressed his disappointed—I think the exact words were "this really sucks!"

Anyway, the group heard of the dilemma and offered Ryan a backstage pass and even invited him to meet them at their bus before the show. "None of this would have hap-



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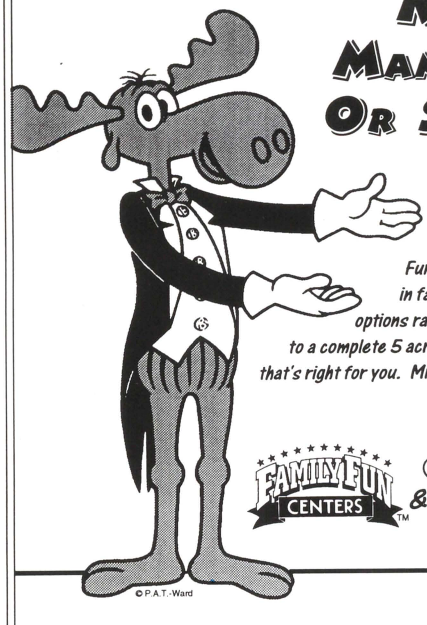

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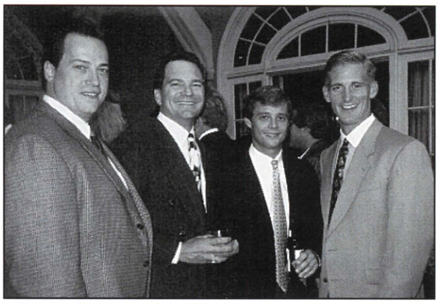
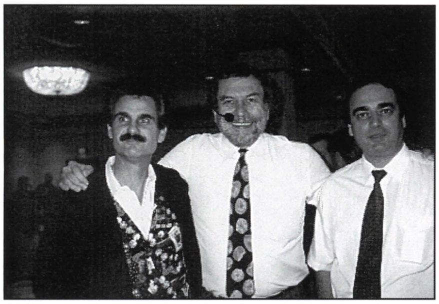
From left: Gaye and Jack Boasberg, a friend and Frank Ballouz, Mark Boasberg, and Mirielle Chevalier with a friend.

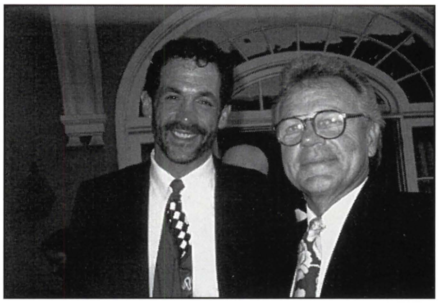
Nolan Bushnell (l) was all smiles as he talked with Fred and Kitty Skor of World Wide Distributing.



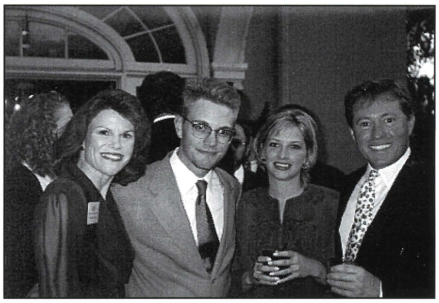
From left: American Vending's Ron Bolger, Brian Duke, Brady's Jon W. Brady, and Shaffer's Scott Shaffer.



Nolan Bushnell (c) with Alex Malavazos (his company made the cabinet for the *Musicnet*) and ElectroCoin's John Stergides.



Frank Ballouz (l) with Struve's Kent Larsen.



Marguerite Kirby and Todd Cravens of Bulldog Amusements with Game Sales' Scott Sammons and a friend.

pened if not for the Internet," Cravens noted. "I would compare this to teenage girls in the '50s or '60s getting a Princess phone. It was the ultimate communication tool. Teenagers talk to their friends; they did it then and they do it now. The method is just different."

He added, "The Internet is here to stay and it's going to be a part of our business with or without us."

By utilizing the Internet, with high speed downloading capabilities Aristo plans three major products: *Teamnet, Touchnet,* and *Musicnet.*

Teamnet is about the size of a small pool table and allows two teams of up to eight players each to compete. They can be in the same location or hooked up through the Internet. It virtually gives players a chance to play anyone anywhere.

"Comparing *Touchnet* to a countertop is like comparing a tricycle to a Ferrari," offered Bushnell. *Touchnet* will offer players a varity of games but that's only the beginning. *Touchnet* will offer customers a range of worlds like Internet, chat rooms, communications, merchandise, and tournaments.

The final offering is *Musicnet.* Cravens explained that music has now come full circle: "First music was offered through a music delivery system. A customer told a girl what he wanted to hear and she played it. Then the industry got innovative and 78 rpm records were played from a self-contained unit. Then there were 45 rpm records and 100 selections, soon followed by 200 selections.

Jukebox manufacturers continued to add innovations like hi-fidelity, stereo sound, discotec, quadraphonic sound, and then CDs. "So where do we go from here?" Cravens asked.

Bushnell continued talking about the music industry, questioning whether the manuacturers were even awake. "It's sad that there have been no significant innovations in the music industry. I predict that there will be no CDs sold in the market within two years. They don't make sense. Today is the first day of the rest of your music life."

He challenges the industry to go big or go home. The *Musicnet* system not only will deliver quality sounding music—any tune you want—at a faster speed than any music system the industry has ever seen, it will also open a world of promotional opportunities. "We used to be the darling of the record companies and we can be again," he noted.

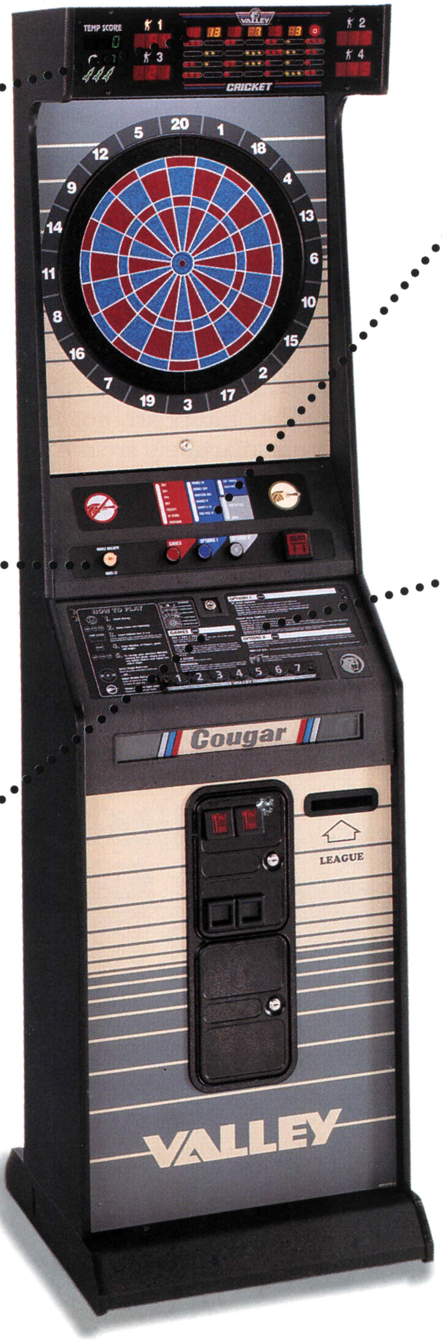
He related the expense involved in placing a CD box, including the cost of the CDs and determined that it was simply too much. "With *Musicnet,* there is no risk, instant updates, and unlimited selections."

The unit itself is offered in two forms: "robot head" and "coke machine" both named to reflect their looks. Both will supply hits even before they appear in record stores. And there will a better sound system. Bushnell claims the unit will increase locations by 30 percent.

Another attractive feature is the continuous play feature. One song will begin to play as the previous one fades out. Since there is no music library to be maintained, labor costs will drop. The unit is designed to take credit cards eliminating mechanical jams, and it is equipped with remote diagnostics.

Giving an example of the promo-

Now you can get a dart machine that has even more than a Valley Cougar …



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Even More games.
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tional capabilities, Bushnell gave this scenario: If a record company wants to promote a new song by playing that song on every *Musicnet* unit in every bar in the United States, say, at 10:00 pm, it can be done and the record manufacturer will pay for the service.

After the presentation on *Musicnet, Touchnet,* and *Teamnet,* Jason Robards, who described his position with MicroSoft as a game tech evangelist, addressed the gathering. "There have been wild rumors about MicroSoft entering the coin-op industry but the truth is much simpler."

He offered that MicroSoft is indeed taking a serious look at the coin-op industry and explained why. "We use computers, you use computers. We sell videos, you sell videos. We make money and you are seeing a serious decline in revenue. The reasons are lack of innovation. The reason is that introducing games is too risky. Manufacturers must lower the cost of failure by lowering the development costs. By lowering those costs, the caliber of games goes down.

The next reason is that the player base is shrinking. "We have the smallest number of teenage boys than we've had in many years. The player base must be expanded," Robards mentioned.

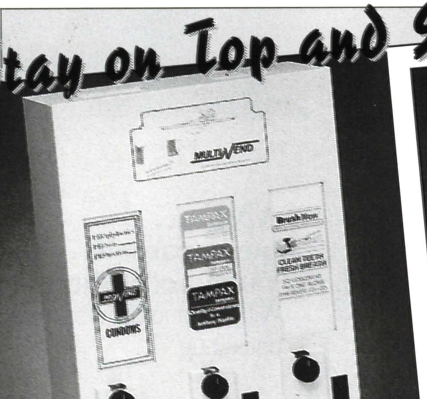
> *"Aristo is introducing network entertainment systems that will connect people in unique ways."*

He added that there are too few games and operators are not taking risks thus manufacturers are not introducing games. It's a vicious cycle. Then there is the increasing prices. "Higher prices are not the result of inflation. Every single PC part has decreased, but the coin-op market continues to show increases."

Although Robards gave a convincing dissertation on the shortcomings of the coin-op industry, he did it to illustrate the optimism and potentional still available. "If all I've spoken about is true, naturally the obvious question is 'why's MicroSoft here?'"

He continued, "The multiplayer games will bring people together in a new way. PC publishers want to enter the market and skill tournaments are going to change the coin-op industry. We want to be a part of if. The bottom line is that the potential is there based on an open system that draws on the strengths of the PC market and not on the weaknesses of the coin-op market."

An enthusiastic Bushnell concluded the meeting by telling the audience: "Hold onto your joysticks. We've seen the future and it's Aristo!" ▲



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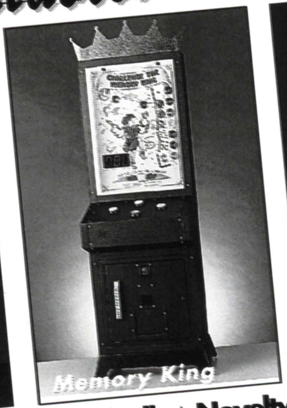

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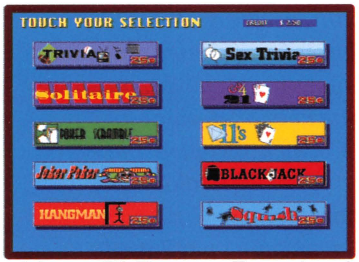
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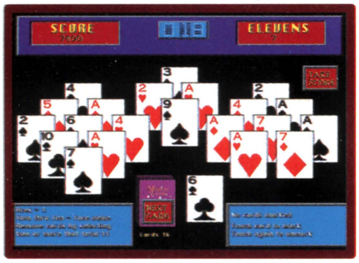
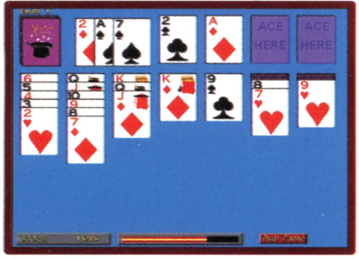
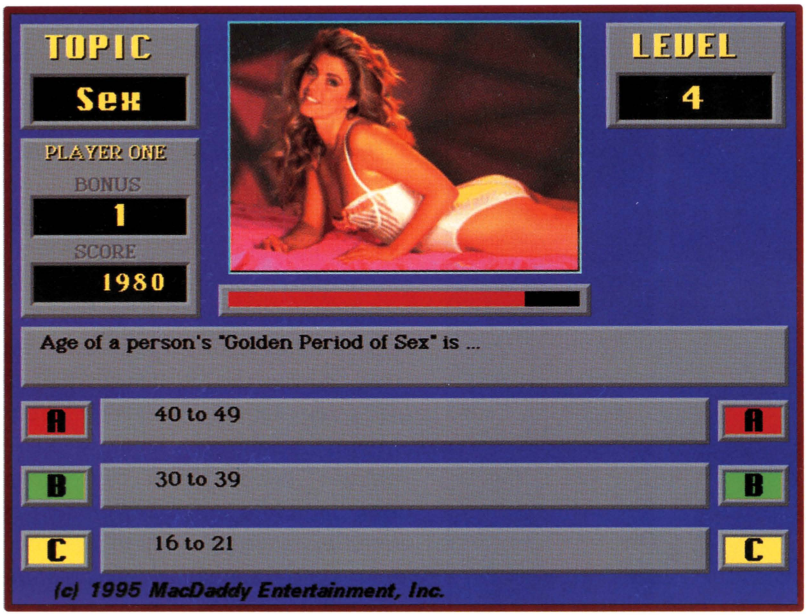

SCORE
ELEVENS

Diamond 11's
The Latest Rage


ACE HERE
ACE HERE

Solitaire - Flip 1 Card Or Flip 3


TOPIC
Sex
LEVEL
4
PLAYER ONE
BONUS
1
SCORE
1980

Age of a person's "Golden Period of Sex" is ...

A 40 to 49
B 30 to 39
C 16 to 21

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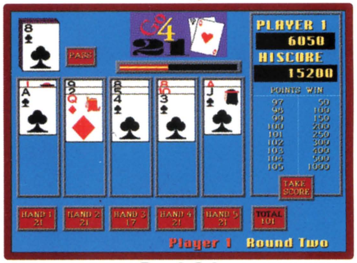
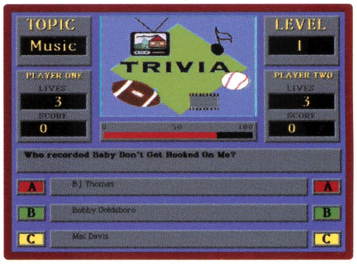

Go 4 21
PASS
PLAYER 1
6050
HISCORE
15200
TAKE SCORE
HAND 1 21
HAND 2 21
HAND 3 17
HAND 4 21
HAND 5 21
TOTAL 101
Player 1 Round Two

POINTS	WIN
97	50
98	100
99	150
100	200
101	250
102	300
103	400
104	500
105	1000

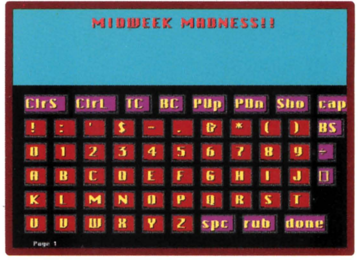
Go-4-21
Multi-Hand Blackjack At it's Best


TOPIC
Music
LEVEL
1
TRIVIA
PLAYER ONE
LIVES
3
SCORE
0
PLAYER TWO
LIVES
3
SCORE
0

Who recorded Baby Don't Get Hooked On Me?

A B.J. Thomas
B Bobby Goldsboro
C Mac Davis

Trivia
Music, TV,Movies,Sports &More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Harold Skripsky

Enchanted Castle

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Harold Skripsky graduated in 1973 from Northwest Missouri State University with a degree in business and marketing and put his credentials to work at McDonald's Corp.

He started at the trainee manager level, progressing rapidly into the regional offices where he held the positions of area supervisor, field consultant, field service manager, and operations manager. As operations manager he honed his management skills, which were put to good use when he and Gary Isner forged a partnership in 1979.

Their first endeavor was two Shell gasoline/food mart stations. As the stations were achieving their projected sales goals, the two then followed with the opening of Oodles, which fulfilled one of Skripsky's life long goals of owning and operating his own restaurant.

Oodles flourished, and Skripsky and Isner began planning their next venture. In 1983 they opened Enchanted Castle, then a 10,000 square foot restaurant and game room in Lombard, Ill. In 1989 Enchanted Castle was expanded by 30,000 square feet, creating the largest indoor family entertainment complex in the state. Annual sales increased over 900 percent between 1983 and 1992.

In 1993 Skripsky and Isner were honored with the Small Business Administration's Entrepreneurial Success Award, and they became the third inductees into the SBA National Hall of Fame. That same year they entered into an agreement with Discovery Zone to create and develop a family entertainment center division. Skripsky was appointed vice president of operations for the FEC division, which included Enchanted Castle and Hollywood Park Family Entertainment centers.

Two years later, Skripsky purchased Enchanted Castle back from Discovery Zone and is now the sole owner and president of the company. He serves on the board of directors for the International Association of Family Entertainment Centers.

Since Skripsky was in the family entertainment center business before the term was coined, we hoped we could hear his views of the industry from his unique perspective. He agreed, and we enjoyed and learned something from his comments. Hope you will too.

Skripsky's vice president of sales, marketing, and creative development, Elena Ruane, shared in the interview and had some comments of her own.

Since you opened in 1983, long before family entertainment centers were popular, did you have some sort of vision of what was to come in the future?

Harold: How you just phrased that is complex. I'm not sure that anyone back in 1983 had a vision of 46,000 square foot family entertainment centers with 20 or more different attractions. FECs evolved into what is happening today.

Elena: Back then you had the Show Biz and Chuck E. Cheese restaurants. As parents came in with

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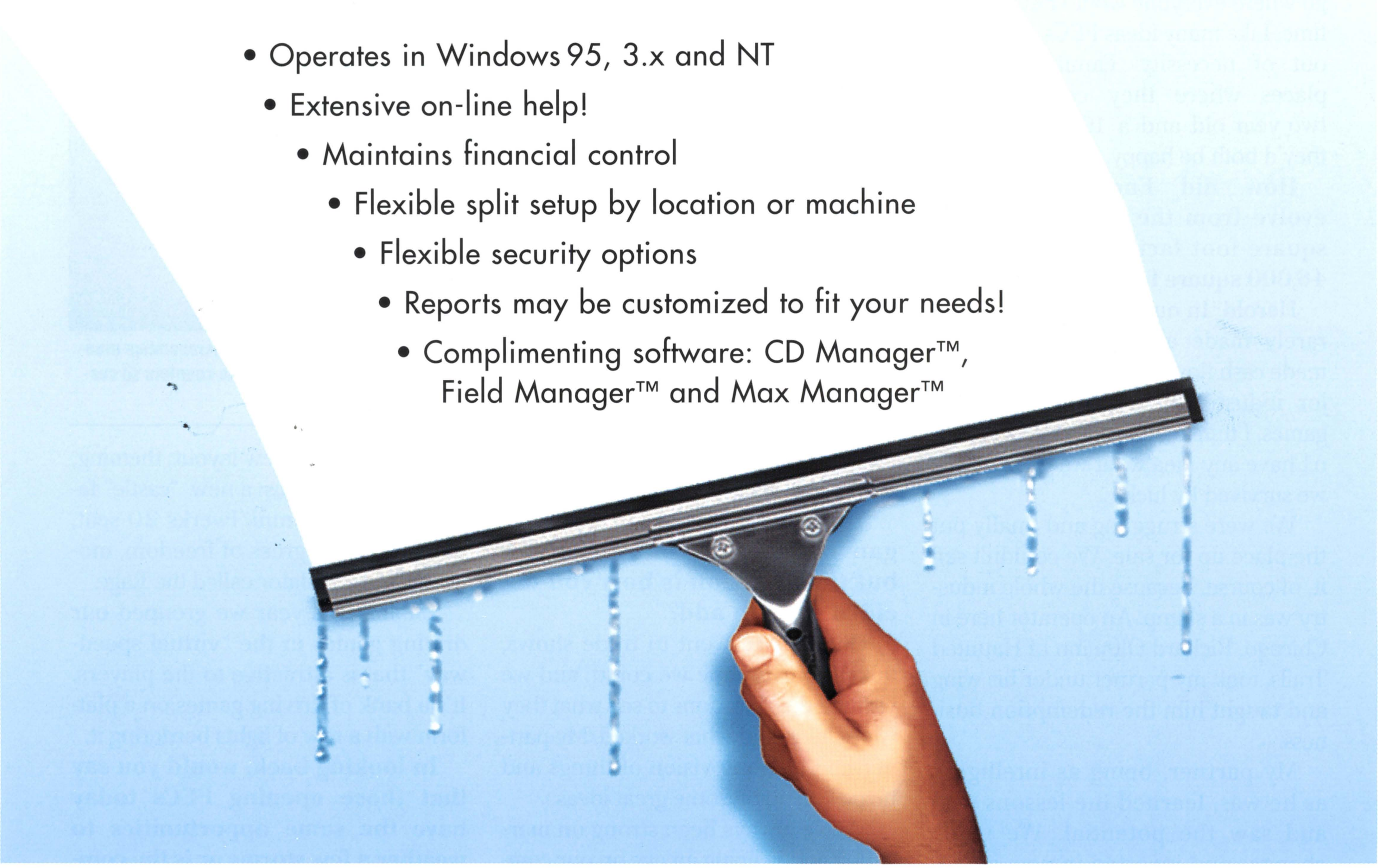

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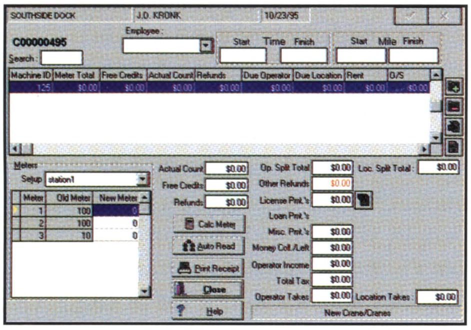

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Meters

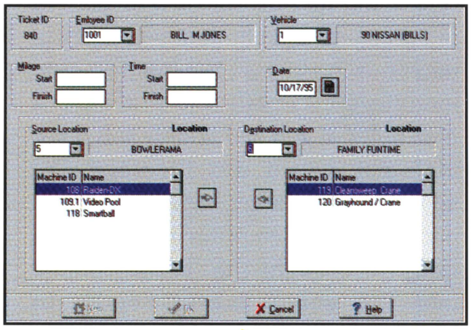
Setup: station1

Meter	Old Meter	New Meter
1	100	0
2	100	0
3	10	0

Actual Count: $0.00
Free Credits: $0.00
Refunds: $0.00
Op. Split Total: $0.00
Loc. Split Total: $0.00
Other Refunds: $0.00
License Pmt.'s: $0.00
Loan Pmt.'s
Misc. Pmt.'s: $0.00
Money Coll./Left: $0.00
Operator Income: $0.00
Total Tax: $0.00
Operator Takes: $0.00
Location Takes: $0.00

New Crane/Cranes

Rotations



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Emloyee ID: 1001 BILL, M JONES
Vehicle: 1 90 NISSAN (BILLS)
Milage Start: Finish:
Time Start: Finish:
Date: 10/17/95

Source Location: 5 — Location: BOWLERAMA

Machine ID	Name
108	Raiden-DX
109.1	Video Pool
118	Smartball

Destination Location: 6 — Location: FAMILY FUNTIME

Machine ID	Name
119	Cleansweep Crane
120	Grayhound / Crane

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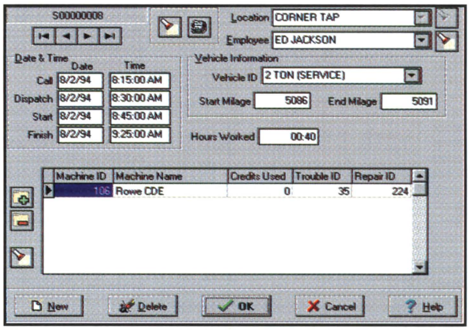

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Location: CORNER TAP
Employee: ED JACKSON

Date & Time

	Date	Time
Call	8/2/94	8:15:00 AM
Dispatch	8/2/94	8:30:00 AM
Start	8/2/94	8:45:00 AM
Finish	8/2/94	9:25:00 AM

Vehicle Information
Vehicle ID: 2 TON (SERVICE)
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their families, they liked what they saw because it was unique. These places had a tremendous effect on the popularity of FECs today.

And, of course, kids don't stay under eight years old. As people had more children there was a wider range of ages and families wanted places to go where everyone would have a good time. Like many ideas FECs developed out of necessity. Families needed places where they could take a two year old and a 10 year old and they'd both be happy.

How did Enchanted Castle evolve from the original 10,000-square-foot facility to its present 46,000 square feet?

Harold: In our formative years we rarely made any profit and barely made cash flow. That was during a major industry slump with the video games. I think back and realize we didn't have any idea what we were doing; we survived by luck!

We were struggling and finally put the place up for sale. We couldn't sell it, of course, because the whole industry was in a slump. An operator here in Chicago, Richard Oltmann of Haunted Trails, took my partner under his wing and taught him the redemption business.

My partner, being as intelligent as he was, learned the lessons well and saw the potential. We made changes and invested in new equipment the right equipment. Remember that not much was happening in redemption at that time. But redemption took off for us.

By 1988 we were maxed out with birthday parties and couldn't go any further. That's when we decided to expand the concept. It was about the same time that things started to roll for family entertainment centers in general.

In 1989 we added 30,000 square feet and the place exploded! We had lots of space but couldn't afford to buy lots of games so we spaced them out. We added an 18 hole indoor miniature golf course and batting cages. We also had a nice redemption counter, certainly nothing like what it is today, but for the times it was respectable.

Harold Skripsky and Elena Ruane in front of the impressive redemption counterwith merchandise manager Len Chekirda. In addition to the main counter, the Castle also has some satellite counters so customers can dream of that certain something throughout the place.

You mentioned that you began expanding your business, but the question is how you decided what to add?

Harold: We went to trade shows, talked to everyone we could, and we visited other locations to see what they were doing and what worked. My partner had a strong vision of things and he picked up on some great ideas.

We've always been strong on marketing and keeping an eye on our competition, trying to differentiate ourselves and finding our own niche. We did then and still continuously re-evaluate our business. We made some modifications in 1993 like taking out nine holes of golf and adding soft modular play which was the rage. We added a whole series of games and expanded our redemption area. In addition, we brought the "castle" theme into the entertainment center. In March of 1993 we added a 5,500-square-foot laser tag attraction. These alterations and additions complemented our over all mix by addressing the younger ages with soft modular play and teens with laser tag.

In 1994 we totally remodeled the restaurant with a new layout; theming; updated animations; a new "castle" facade; and the Omni/Iwerks 20 seat, five pod, six degrees of freedom, motion based simulator called the Rage.

Elena: This year we grouped our driving games in the "virtual speedway" that is attractive to the players. It's a bank of driving games on a platform with a row of lights bordering it.

In looking back, would you say that those opening FECs today have the same opportunities to weather a few storms or is the competition too tough?

Harold: Those opening places today have a lot of advantages that we didn't have in 1983. There are outstanding seminars, associations like the International Association of Family Entertainment Centers focusing on family entertainment centers, and there's a wealth of people with knowledge on what makes FECs tick. A lot of the mistakes have been paid for and a lot of the bugs have been worked out.

Publications like Play Meter write fabulous articles about how to operate specific areas. We didn't have articles like that and very few really understood all the parts of the redemption equation. And I can't emphasize

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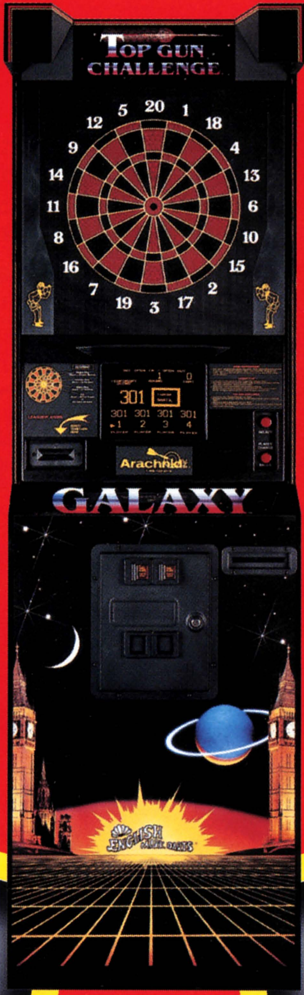

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enough that it's no easy equation. I'm tinkering with one of my parts right now that simply got out of whack! More people are beginning to understand it now.

As for competition, I can't speak for the rest of the country, but here in Chicago competition is brutal. Chicago is becoming over built with a plethora of FECs, AECs, CECs, and if that isn't enough we compete with our own tax dollars. The park districts and towns develop water parks and entertainment venues. You can only chop up the entertainment dollar so many ways before nobody's happy. And I won't even get into river boat casinos, movie theaters, etc.

I'm glad you brought up the aspect of redemption. How did your redemption counter, which is impressive, evolve?

Harold: It grew along with demand. Our customers let us know when it was time to expand and it evolved from there. We didn't wake up one day and say, "Hey, let's add 75 feet of glass to our redemption counter."

Elena: Another aspect is differentiating yourself from your competition. Why should people come here instead of somewhere else? If they can play the same games in a number of locations, the next thing you must ask is, "What are they going to do with those tickets?" Wouldn't anyone rather win tickets that are going to lead to a better prize in our store than a few rinky dink prizes somewhere else? We have a lot of guests who save their tickets and they are looking for 14 karat jewelry and signed jerseys. We've done things like that and people actually walk in with 50,000 tickets!

Harold: Here again, new operators have a great ability to learn from what people are doing and what has been successful. The operator looking to get into the industry or one who is struggling can go to a number of places around the country and see it working and discover why it's working.

We didn't have those advantages. If Richard Oltmann wouldn't have taught us about redemption, I'm not sure where we'd be today. But we listened, learned, and put his suggestions into practice. Operators today have many, many more opportunities to learn.

Elena: As Harold said, redemption evolved. What helped us is that after we saw the important role redemption played we made some significant changes. For instance, in the past we had the general manager making the merchandise selections. Now we put on staff someone whose job it is to do the buying and handle the redemption area. When you are doing many tasks it's hard to give any one of them your sole attention. Redemption takes someone's full attention.

Harold: Being new compared to many veteran operators, we didn't have a lot of preconceived ideas about coin-op, so we experimented. We were trying things that long-time operators perhaps would have told

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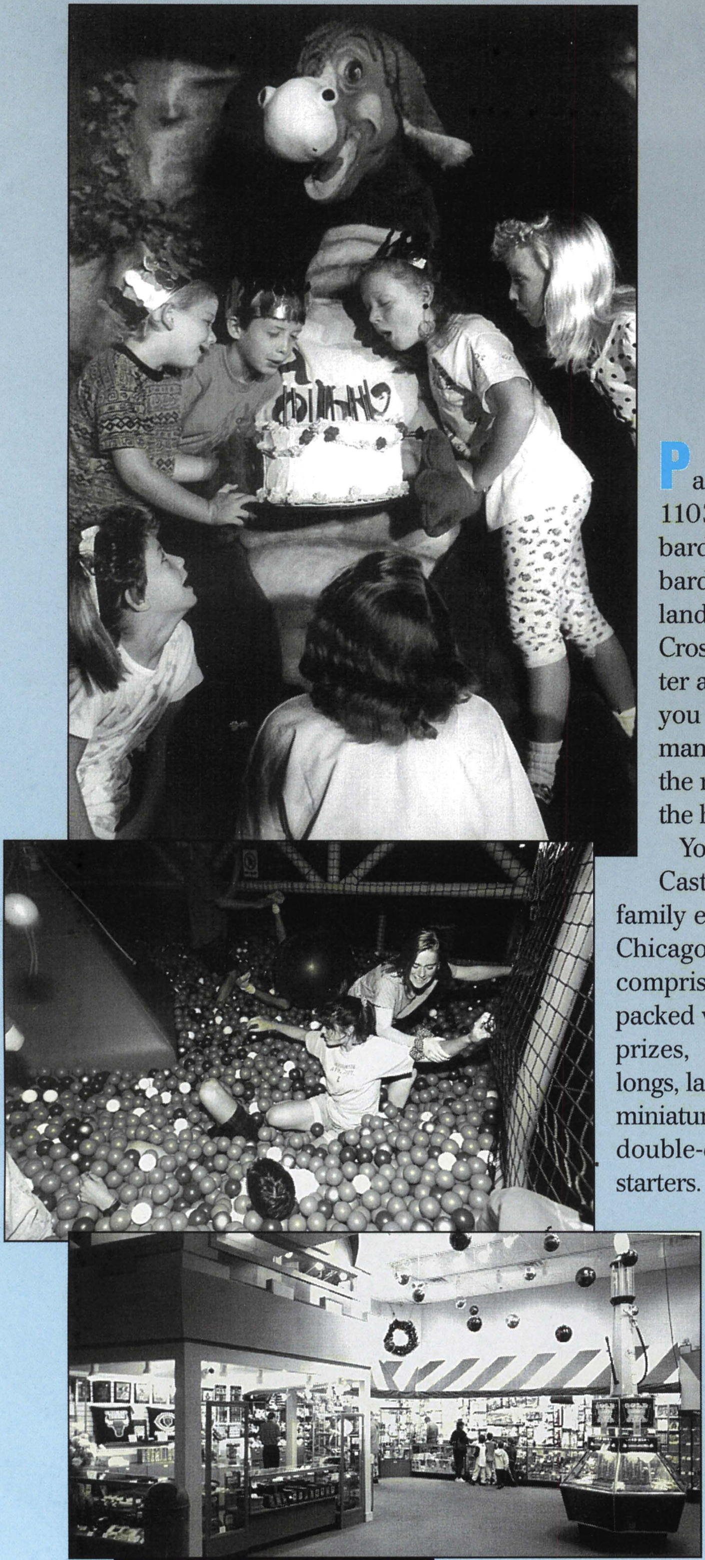

Top: The ImaGYMnation Station features lots and lots of balls. Middle: Party time! Toby the birthday dragon charms celebrants. Bottom: The redemption center is stocked with over 800 prizes.

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us didn't work. But we didn't know it wouldn't work so we tried it. Most of the time, it did work!

What would be the biggest headache about running such a large redemption counter?

Harold: The most important thing to remember is that your redemption counter is literally a store. We have 800-plus items and there's always something new. Someone's always building that new widget and you have to have it and you have to have it a good price. You must be prepared to view redemption as a serious business.

Our biggest headache is customer service at the redemption counter itself. It's the last stop before the guests leave the facility and how well they are handled will enhance or disturb their experience. Leaving our guests with magic thoughts is not always easy and it's something that we are constantly working on through new technology or procedures.

What is your most popular attraction?

Elena: The games, if you consider them an attraction.

Harold: The redemption games are the biggest revenue producer per square foot, however, our laser tag operation is very popular.

Are you satisfied with the equipment, especially video, that's being offered?

Harold: That's a can of worms. Of course, I'm not satisfied. My video games and percentage of sales haven't gone anywhere. But you must have a mix because the balance of the mix is the key. So even if my video games are not the biggest revenue earners, I must keep them updated. New incremental sales seem harder and harder to come by. Many times we see that adding new equipment is more a maintaining exercise. That makes us even more choosy and purchased pieces must have something unique about them. You know the old saying: "Variety is the spice of life."

Elena: You can't have just one thing. If you were an ice cream store and vanilla ice cream was your biggest seller, you couldn't decide to only sell vanilla ice cream. Then all the chocolate lovers would go elsewhere, taking many of your vanilla customers who could still get vanilla somewhere else.

Harold: I think a good mix is 50 to 55 percent redemption, 20 to 25 percent video games, and the other percent the rest of the attractions. That formula seems to work, but we are always looking and re-evaluating just like every FEC owner should be doing.

Going back to evolving and changing, it's a never ending battle. My staff and I sit in meetings all the time asking, What's next? What is out there? or What can we create that will help our FEC move in the direction we want it to move?

You can't sit back and simply let things happen. If you do, what will happen is that you'll be out of business. I'd say that you have to reinvest in your business all the time. I don't mean every now and then but constantly.

Also facility maintenance is absolutely essential. I'm talking about cans of paint in everyone's hands and scrub brushes in use all the time. Technicians should be game attendants. I have a facility maintenance manager who has a staff of four. He has people painting and scrubbing walls nearly every day. There's no telling how many coats of paint I have on my walls!

Yes, it's an expense, but if you don't do that it will catch up to you; it's only a matter of time.

What kind of advice do you have concerning employees?

Elena: The employees are crucial. They can make a difference in your location, as much as a new attraction. I always say that the attractions are tools and it's what we do with them that counts.

The employees and their interaction with the customers are paramount to the success of the business. If you have an employee behind the counter who is not so friendly, then your repeat business may not be so great. But just the opposite is true if an employee is interacting with your customers making them feel important and welcome. Never underestimate the value of your employees.

Your employees add a dimension to your business that can be a strong competitive advantage. I used to say, and it may be a bit of an exaggeration, but when the industry was new managers could fold their arms, plug in the new games, and watch it happen. Now everybody can buy the same games so your employees will make a bigger difference than ever.

Harold: I was with McDonald's, a company with incredible management and crew training programs who treated their people really well. I hope some of my training has rubbed off here. As for management we tend to be a bit over managed. Although our goal is to promote from within, when we do hire from outside we are pretty picky. There are a series of interviews (usually four or five), our OJE day (on-the-job evaluation where they decide if they really want to work for us), a psychology test, and a thorough screening of references among other things by an outside company. The idea is to have a motivated employee who wants to work here, not just have a job.

As for our crew, in this competitive environment your people are your most important asset. They can make or break you right there on the floor. You can't smile every minute but the attitude and how they express themselves all comes with how management treats them. So obviously strong management skills are vital.

In addition, we have some employee programs that include crew member of the month. We also have magic points. Anytime a manager sees a crew member do something above and beyond the call of duty he gives that employee magic points. They accumulate the magic points and can purchase many things. There are a lot of words that are being overworked like empowerment, but I tell my crew members that their job is to make my customers happy. And, of course, I try to make them happy about doing that.

Now I'm not going to tell you that it always works because we aren't perfect. We have our warts like everyone else. But we have a management attitude that I can only hope trickles down to the crew people. We have weekly meetings trying to find ways to motivate them.

I also think it's important to understand the job. For instance, if someone is working the redemption counter and there's a line 10 deep all day long, that person's going to get stressed out. Therefore, we try to rotate people to various jobs so they aren't doing the same thing all the time.

The bottom line is that we're trying to keep a happy crew. They communicate with us and we know that if they like it here, our customers will feel their attitude.

Peering into the future, I think it's going to be much harder to hire good kids and motivate them. For one, the minimum wage is going up and it will cost operators more money. Plus I think the job market is going to be even more competitive. When that happens getting and retaining good employees will just get tougher. There's more competition from the retailers and working in an FEC is work. You have to hustle; there's no standing around.

Do you have some words of wisdom about birthday parties?

Harold: Don't rest on your laurels. There is too much competition for birthday parties. Everybody and their brother has learned, probably from FECs, that birthday parties can be very lucrative.

As I said earlier, I've got park districts building lavish water parks and entertainment areas on public grounds using my tax dollars.

We have a variety of birthday and group packages that combine our various attractions and we offer themed events. We can combine Karaoke and all offer standards such as our animated characters, fun machine, or birthday party wheel. We have also added a variety of optional add-on items. Here again, we are all wondering what we can do next. The intensity of the entertainment combined with the value quotient must be present in every package.

Do you think that kids and their parents are expecting much more nowadays?

Elena: Absolutely. No matter what you do they'll turn around and say, what's next?

Harold: The expectation levels are almost getting out of hand. There's a point where you can't spend enough money to exceed customer's expectations. Maybe it's a bit philosophical, but I don't see any silver bullets on the horizon. If you have a balanced mix of attractions and you've got laser tag and done a good job with it, what's next? I'm not yet sold that virtual reality has anything but a curiosity impact. But the jury's still out and I'm watching closely.

What it really boils down to is how you operate your facility. It will be all the little details and the controls where you can reduce theft, reduce waste and product turnover, and increase productivity because you'll be paying crew people more and operating expenses will continue to rise.

The smart operators will buckle down to details and pay close attention to their customers. Talk to them, do focus groups and surveys, and find out what they want. Do special things for your guests. For example, if they a want a TV that you don't carry in your redemption center, go get it for them.

To summarize your question, kids are smarter than ever. There's no fooling them. Technology is awesome and almost every kid is yawning and asking, "Is this all you got?" or "This is easy, have anything harder?" The kick is that their parents won't go near some of the video games because they are too sophisticated. We must rely on our manufacturers to find new ways to exceed expectations without putting those attractions out of affordability.

You mentioned laser tag. What are your thoughts for those who may be looking into it?

Harold: Many operators are three years behind the curve. We've had our laser tag for over three years and are extremely pleased with the decision and results.

What would you tell those looking into it now?

Harold: I was laughing about that yesterday. When we got into it was really easy; there was only one choice! Now there must be 13 or 15 companies offering some form of laser tag. You could drive yourself crazy trying to decide which one is for you.

But then you can look at the positive side. At least you've got a lot of choices! You can pick the right one depending on your age groups and target markets. Of course, that's based on your knowing who your customer base really is. There is no way I can expound on laser tag because there are too many options and we don't have enough time. Basically, just know who you are targeting.

We saw Photon about 10 years ago surge in popularity and then fizzle away. Do you think the laser tag we have today will be around?

Harold: I'm betting on it!

Elena: It may, like any attraction, level off. Soft modular play was here 10 years ago but parents did not want to spend 50 cents for their children to play. Like we've seen before, something will come along but the timing is just a little bit off and it doesn't work at that time. Sometimes the technology has to catch up with the idea.

In laser tag in general it's technology and acceptance in the market. I've heard it said that an idea takes three times before the public accepts it.

Harold: I think that's true. I also think that if someone isn't on the laser tag bandwagon he's really missing an opportunity. Here again, this attraction is not a magic wand. You have to work on it. Yes, ours is attached to Enchanted Castle but it's run separately. We have doors that can close off the rest of the park so we can run laser tag at different times. We can have special parties. I even have separate management, and market it differently.

Elena: Its appeal is different too. In addition to the technology of the equipment and the maintenance and repair aspect of it, there's arena design. There again as more places open up that will be the difference the games, software, and the arena design. As people get into it they must know what the competition is.

Harold: I have some heresy to tell you! Don't get hung up on the high tech, sophisticated computer systems. The key to successful laser tag is how the kids are treated when they come in, how well you show them how to play, how well your marshals interact with them, and how much fun they have. Everyone pretty much has the newest technology but I wouldn't get hung up on it. Of course, it's a selling point, but the main thing is that the equipment works and how the players are treated.

I'd like to compliment you on those you have working in your laser tag. When we visited your facility, I noticed that they looked like they truly enjoyed their jobs.

Harold: As we speak they are flying down to Florida to take part in tournaments. Hey, there's another key. Your employees get so into this game that they help perpetuate your core business and become a mini sales force.

What measures have you taken to ensure children's safety?

Elena: That is very important. As we've expanded the Castle, it has become even a larger issue. Obviously when we added Q-Zar we added another entrance so there's one into the restaurant and another main entrance. With three entrances we've had to take a critical look.

Some people who have been familiar with a 10,000- to 12,000-square-foot Chuck E. Cheese location get nervous about a place that's 46,000 square feet when it comes to their kids.

How we've addressed it is a security camera system, all of our staff have radios, and last year we added the Castle Corral.There's only one way in and out so parents can keep an eye on their kids.

Harold: In our soft playground area we have a system of wristbands. One allows the kids to come and go and another is for kids who cannot get out until a parent comes. If we catch a kid on the main floor without his shoes, we know he's an escapee and we bring him back. We take it seriously and have never had a problem.

What about serving food? That's a topic that always comes up when people are planning an FEC.

Harold: I am going to participate in a seminar at Fun Expo on this subject. Food service is an area where many operators are missing the boat. Food service may not produce revenue per square foot like games, but it's still one of your most important attractions. It all goes together and in this competitive environment those who have outstanding food service will have the competitive edge.

Food service offers so many opportunities to address a customer's needs and exceed expectations. It drives me crazy when I go in places a see a menu limited to corndogs, frozen hamburgers, and perhaps nachos or hot dogs on a rotisserie. I'm sensitive to the fact that different locations call for different ways of handling food service. I'm not putting down snack bars by any means. I'm saying that there are no real secrets in food service and with a little know how and investigation you can expand your food service menu, quality, and guest expectations fairly easily. What used to be the norm should not be. You'd be amazed at what range of foods you can produce out of 100 square feet.

Elena: We always said, "come for the fun and stay for the food." Now with all the competition we see food service as a competitive edge. Our restaurant seats 625 and we can do anything from a hot dog to a dinner that might be $30 a person.

Harold: You open up a lot of new doors, all kinds of special events, parties, and group activities. But you must be willing to make a huge commitment. In a restaurant you can lose a lot of money and that's why so many people are apprehensive. However, there are many restaurant industry people that can help you be successful. Again, our seminar at the Fun Expo on food and beverage should be helpful. We will have informative handouts, discussions on topics like discovering who your customer is so you can build the right menu, sharp food consultants, and the National Restaurant Association. We will also feature discussions on co-vending and I've invited McDonald's as well as a gentleman who's really into "branding America" who will discuss how co-vending may work for the operator.

Are there any last thoughts on the FEC business?

Elena: I know that Harold always says that this business is a lot more complicated than people think.

Harold: We are in prosperous times or so it seems. Everybody is jumping on the entertainment bandwagon and competition is fierce and bound to get worse from all angles. Games and attractions are getting more expensive, yet new incremental sales are harder to come by as cannibalization and trade offs are more frequent. Making a fair ROI is more difficult than before especially with reinvestment demands. To keep us smiling and happy we're going to have to work harder and smarter and pay attention to every detail and cost. We'll also have to work the conventions harder than ever. See you there! ▲

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School bells ring for the FEC industry

In the Northern hemisphere, September is the beginning of fall and the end of the season—that is the season when the youngsters are not in school. In some climes it's the beginning of cool weather, but this end of season isn't really a weather-related event for fun centers; it's school-related.

A good portion of the customers and most of the part-time employees go back to school; fun center managers adjust.

The beginning of school, however, does not have the same impact on fun centers as it does on traditional outdoor amusement parks. Even those centers which have extensive outdoor activities, often remain open year round, whether or not they can operate the outdoor attractions year round.

Each season brings unique FEC marketing opportunities. And slack periods offer opportunities to do major cleaning, redecorating, and renovation. If he's smart and lucky, a manager has some money in the budget (and in the bank) for these purposes.

I was asked not too long ago about the expected life span of a family entertainment center. I joked that I didn't know any that have died of old age. But the fact is that some amusement facilities are dying and others are sick. There are many reasons for this—some external, some internal, some a combination.

Still, some are doing well and new ones are opening.

In the excitement of opening a new facility, the owners and managers aren't thinking of old age, anymore than a teenage employee is thinking of retirement. But that teenager who puts $100 into a retirement fund now will find it worth $10,000 more than put away 10 years later.

Similarly, a successful or new facility that makes plans from the beginning on how to stay new and exciting will be constantly working on keeping up to date. Staying the same is not an option; new is where the action is.

Fall is also the trade show season in our business.

So it's back to school for those managers who are smart enough to keep on learning. The fall amusement trade shows, like our own Fun Expo, are the means to this continuing education. Each year trade show managers bring you the newest products and the newest ideas. I've heard some seasoned pros say the seminars have nothing new. I say, "Baloney!" Sure, the best seminars are repeated from time to time for those newcomers who are there to learn all they can and put it into practice, but each year there are new seminars and programs.

> ***"Staying the same is not an option; new is where the action is."***

A person would have to try hard NOT to learn something new. One of the more experienced and savvy managers I know makes his own networking opportunities. He plans ahead and invites managers who are at his level of experience and have similar operations in other parts of the country to share experiences and ideas.

The first step to having a good trade show for an FEC manager begins before he packs a bag. It involves a walk around his place and some time in thoughtful consideration. He should be asking himself questions like "What is starting to get a little tired?" What customer do I want to appeal to?" and "What new product, service, or idea will make a difference and be worth the investment?" These questions can also be asked of employees. It takes a creative, open mind to critique your location.

At IAFEC (International Association of Family Entertainment Centers) we get many calls from people who are thinking about or planning to get into the business. We try to give them insight into what they are going to need. This time of year, the answer is somewhat easier: We tell them to go to Fun Expo, go to all the seminars, talk to all the exhibitors, go to all the social events, and talk to everyone they meet. Nowhere will they learn so much so quickly.

The experienced manager will want to be more selective. Study the program and go to the seminars that promise new ideas. Stay after the session and talk to the speakers about your own specific concerns. Study the trade show directory and spend quality time with those exhibitors who seem to have a product or service that you need. Make appointments to see them off the trade show floor.

Plan ahead to see other managers who run an operation similar to yours. Spend some social time with them, perhaps lunch or breakfast. Talk shop. Share your successes and challenges and they will share theirs with you.

It's easy to take a slack period as an opportunity to kick back and relax. And we certainly do need to do that since this business tends to take over our lives. We have to remind ourselves to keep some balance, build in some time for family and community. It's always a juggling act finding time for everything.

But on the other hand, we cannot lose sight of our business and the dedication needed to keep it working. Education, defined in the broadest sense, is one important aspect that is too easily overlooked in the face of those urgent day-to-day tasks. But it is too important to neglect. It's the ticket to success.

CAROLE SJOLANDER

Carole Sjolander is the executive director of the IAFEC. She will be writing articles for us throughout the year. If you have a specific question you'd like to see addressed, please let us know and we'll pass it along. ▲

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JOHN PETKUS

Here's what we had in mind for a story about Las Vegas.

Sin City, Glitter Gulch, Lost Wages. Just a few of the many things the over 30 million tourists a year who flock to our little oasis in the desert call Las Vegas.

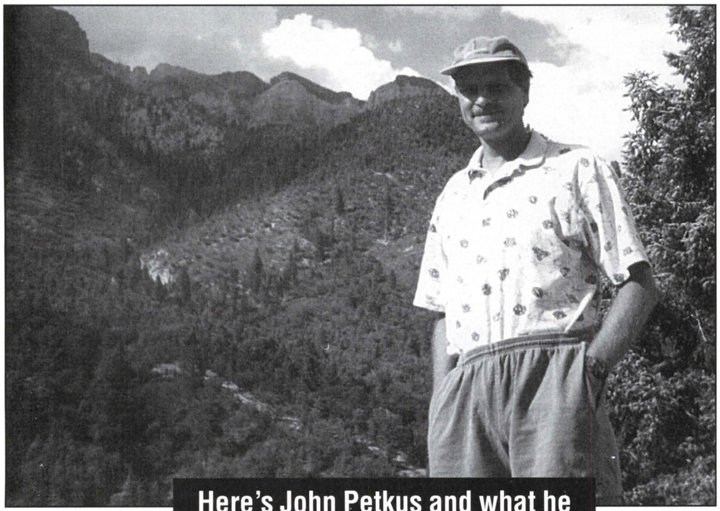
Though you may have read or heard that the city's marketing types are trying to purport us as the new "family destination," the glamour, intrigue and glitziness are still here, maybe just packaged in different ways.

For those who have been here before, even a short while ago, this town continues to grow and change at an enormous rate. If you've never been here, Las Vegas is probably everything and more than you ever imagined. The guide that follows will give you first-timers and veterans alike a local's perspective of the obvious and the not so obvious things that Las Vegas has to offer.

Most tourists, whether new or seasoned, never make it east or west of the strip (Las Vegas Blvd.) by more than 100 yards. I'm not saying that you won't find plenty of things to do on the strip, but there are also a few things to do off the strip, too. (Can you believe it?)

And here I answer the most asked question any tourist asks a local, "What hotel do you live in...?" Now, this may indeed sound a little silly, but since I moved here three years ago that one question is the most frequently asked of me as I travel around the United States.

The answer is obvious. Well, I think it is at least. We do have homes, churches, schools (the seventh largest district



Here's John Petkus and what he loves about Las Vegas!

John, who is director of sales for Diversified Systems Inc., lives in Las Vegas so we persuaded him to give us a local's view of the city. Of course, while we had in mind neon lights and chorus girls, he had visions of wilderness and the outdoors. How nice that both are there.

The International Association of Family Entertainment Centers

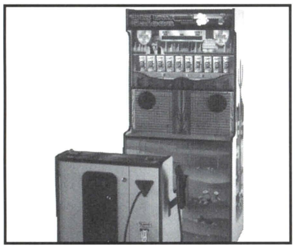
THIRD ANNUAL SILENT AUCTION

taking place at:

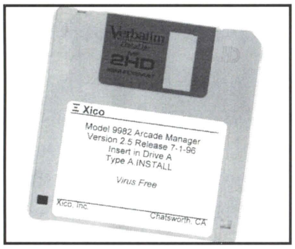
FUN EXPO '96 October 9-12, Las Vegas, NV

For details call: (914) 993-9297 • Fax: (914) 993-9219

Bankshot Basketball
Gift certf. for purchase



Coin Concepts
Six Gun Saloon



Verbatim
2HD
Xico
Model 9982 Arcade Manager
Version 2.5 Release 7-1-96
Insert in Drive A
Type A:INSTALL
Virus Free
Xico, Inc.
Chatsworth, CA

Xico
Xico Arcade Manager w/ purchase of 100 card mech.

Actual Reality International
$12,000 credit towards a 20 laser tag Top Gun

Ascension Productions
$10,000 credit on laser tag purchase

Ferris Productions
$3,500 credit toward Experience System

Fun Enterprises
$5,000 voucher towards purchase of *Bowlingo*

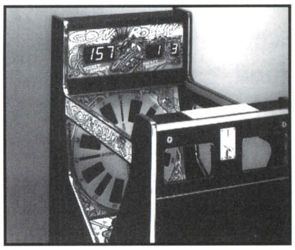
Company	Donation
Adventure Golf Services	Consulting with Arne Lundmark
Alpha Omega Amusements	1 day consult by Frank the Crank
American Miniature Golf & Track	Golf print
Amusement Consultants	Midway pinball machine
Astro Putt/Marquis Carpet Mills	disc. on Art. turf or game rm. carpet
Betson Imperial Export	Home Air Hockey game
Bonita Marie	am/fm cassette
Brady Distributing	Midway *NBA Hangtime* conv. kit
Cardxpress	Credit on FotoFun machine
Carol Flemming Costume Design	Mascot
Challenger Industries	50› / sq. yd. disc. off list price
Classic Software	Credit on ABC software
Cost of Wisconsin	Micro golf design
Dan Brechner & Co.	Large plush toys
Design Plus Industries	Gift certificate
Doyle Trading Group	two signs
Fabricon	Carousel horse
Flagship Carpets	4 black light rugs
Frieder, Inc.	Misc. high end electronic items
Fun Center Software	Full software package
Funtime Playgrounds	Toddler ball pool
Gametime	$2,000 credit
Great American Toy, Co.	6 large plush pieces
Harris Miniature Golf	Design and color rendering
HMS Monaco	3 plush kits
Innovative Computer Systems	$1,000 credit on Tot Tracker
Just Kiddie Rides	credit toward kiddie ride
Kart Marketing Intl.	Full pg. 2/color ad in KMI
Lasertron	credit on game purchase
Little Putt Mini Golf Course	Design 18/36 hole mini golf course
Marylen Costume	Mascot costume
Mason Corporation	5 Roller Racers
Midway Shopper	(5) 5" display ads
Moon-Walk Enterprises	$500 credit
Namco Cybertainment	Numan Athletics kit
Omni	credit toward purchase
P&H Company	330 ft. Flex-A-Lite
Perky's Foodservice Concepts	Free design fee
Pezzetta Miniature Golf Co.	Disc. on 18 hole mini golf design
Play Meter Magazine	(2) 1 year subscriptions
R.M.K. Sales	various electronics
Rides Unlimited	Gift certificate
Roger Williams Mint	10,000 tokens
Sellner Manufacturing	$2,500 credit toward ride purchase
Spaceball, Ltd.	$3,500 credit on Spaceball unit
Spectra Products	Fun Net
Sportsline Distributors	Michael Jordan signed bat & ball
Street Beat Magazine	1 full page ad (b&w)
Tenderfun Soft Playgrounds	baby ball pool
Weenie Ride Co.	credit toward purchase
White Hutchinson Leisure	1 day consulting by Randy White
William H. Haralson & Assoc.	1 day consulting
Zamperla	(4) $500 discount coupons

Fun Equipment Sales
Off with Your Head game

George Kaseric & Assoc.
Advertising Design Production

Laser Storm
Credit on Stargate System
(3,000 sq. ft. arena)

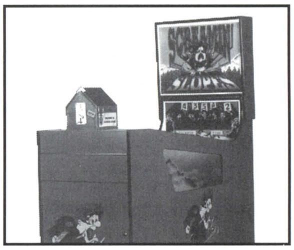
Namco America
Godzilla Wars Jr. game



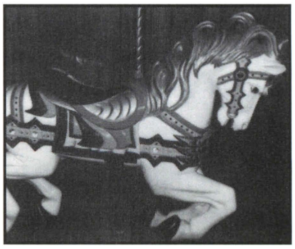
Seidel Amusement Mach. Co.
Goin' Rollin' Redemption game

BARREL OF FUN

Sellner Manufacturing
$10,000 credit on 4-pl. Spin ride



Williams Electronics
Screamin' Slopes & *Ticket Tac Toe*



Wisdom Amusement Rides
Carousel horse

Pentes Play
Purchase discount

Photon
$3,500 credit toward purchase of Photon Laser Tag

IAFEC thanks its many generous donors and encourages FUN EXPO attendees to bid on and win these and other great Silent Auction prizes. The monies raised go toward furthering IAFEC's educational and market research goals.

in the U.S.), and malls. Not all of us are dealers or pit bosses, chances are we don't gamble everyday, and we find it very easy not to since like you, we value our savings too.

The one thing we do know is where most of the good deals, good food, and good fun are here in our valley. Las Vegas has world class food, spectacular entertainment, and incredible deals. Below are my picks based on the fact that I'm a local, and I should know, right...?

Good food

I start here because most tourists are looking for the "perfect" meal. Most seem to focus on the buffet, a Las Vegas tradition. The hands down pick for best buffet in Las Vegas is the Carnival World Buffet at the Rio Suite Hotel and Casino. It repeatedly has been chosen "Best of" in Las Vegas by the local residents. Trust me on this, most buffets here are good; this one is primo.

Plan on waiting in line because many people already know this poorly kept secret and flock to it at the prime meal times. It is worth the wait and the scenery at the Rio is also very good. Guys, the Rio's cocktail waitresses have also been voted "Best of" in Las Vegas for several years in a row too!

On the romantic side of things, several very nice restaurants come to mind if you want quiet and a certain amount of privacy along with great food. Primivera at Caesars Palace, Fiore at the Rio, and Monte Carlo at the Desert Inn are some of my favorite places for that "special" dinner.

If you like listening to your favorite tunes from a good piano bar with your dinner, Cafe Nicolle is a local favorite. The music is great, the food is even better, and you may even see a few gaming professionals and local politicians enjoying the atmosphere. It's only two miles west of the strip for those of you who are adventurous.

For a good old fashioned Italian dinner I recommend Batista's Hole in the Wall near Bally's. Unpretentious, fun waiters, and good food for those of you who want a less formal atmosphere.

> ***"I'm not saying that you won't find plenty of things to do on the strip, but there are also a few things to do off the strip, too."***

Like I said, most food in this town HAS to be good; there is just too much competition for it to be anything less. One final hint, you see a lot of advertising for $1.99 Steak, $2.99 Lobster, etc., but when you go into the restaurant you don't see it on the menu. Most places never put these specials on the menu because they change so often. All you have to do is ASK and you shall receive. Don't assume they don't have it if it isn't on the menu.

Entertainment

The big entertainment shows like "EFX" at the MGM, "Siegfried & Roy" at the Mirage, "Mystere" at Treasure Island, and "Starlight Express" at the Las Vegas Hilton are all magnificent and must-sees if you've got the time and $$$. Some smaller shows of note are also worth a couple hours of your time and less of your $$$. These include "Beyond Belief" at Harrah's, "Country Tonight" at the Aladdin, "Copacabana" dinner show at the Rio, and the "Legends in Concert" at the Imperial Palace.

If you're into just kicking back and listening to some good tunes, you may find Sonny Charles & the Emeralds brand of "motown" and soul very appealing. You can catch them at the Casbah Lounge at the Sahara. If you're thinking more in terms of high energy, glitzy, and sexy entertainment, Christine W and the Sting at the Las Vegas Hilton will not disappoint. Of course, one of the old standards for lounging is Cleopatra's Barge at Caesars, where it's never a dull moment on or off the dance floor.

For the X-generation crowd (and maybe those of us who sometimes wish we were), the Beach and the Drink are the two major hang outs. Lines form early for the all night fun and dancing. Club Rio also provides a little classier version of the former two places.

The "other" strip

About seven miles east of the famous Las Vegas Strip lies the not so famous Boulder Strip. Along Boulder Highway are three major casinos that cater mostly to the local population. These casinos are Sam's Town, Boulder Station, and the Showboat. Since these places are targeting locals, you will find that there are better food and entertainment deals, not to mention a better payback on your favorite slot and video poker machines compared to the big strip to the west.

All of these casinos are either new or have gone through extensive remodeling and are at par with the finest Las Vegas has to offer. It's a nice diversion if you feel compelled to get away from the crowds.

But I have the kids

Yes, you took heed and brought the little ones with you. We have quite a few diversions that will fill up their days now that we have been dubbed the "family destination." On the strip

. . . Laser tag manufacturer will install a LAZER RUNNER System in your facility without you paying for it!!!

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

YOU WANT IT? - CALL AND GET IT!

The most incredible promotion in the amusement industry is now in full swing. You can see first hand, one of the best revenue generators in the amusement business operating at your site - without taking any risk!

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

A manufacturer of laser tag equipment, Ascension Productions is now offering a promotion that is unheard of in the laser tag industry: Try Before You Buy. With their goal of opening 250 Lazer Runner sites in 1996, Ascension has designated 125 Lazer Runner Battle Stations as "Try Before You Buy" systems.

LAZER RUNNER BATTLE STATION

The Battle Station is a high end, but affordable laser tag system that includes everything that the expensive systems offer. Plus, it's modular, expandable, and quick and easy to set up or move.

The Battle Station appeals to a wide range of venues including indoor family fun centers, amusement parks, bowling centers, water parks, shopping centers, carnival circuits, tourist destinations, go-cart tracks, mini-golf centers, etc.

The system comes with fourteen phasers and fibre-optic vests (7 per team), but can easily be expanded at anytime by adding more phasers. Included with the system is individual scoring, team scoreboard, remote scoreboard reset, remote startup super control, cash control system, smart charging module, two homebase stations, vibrating hit sensors, battle sector mines that shoot back at players, intruder warning detectors, black lights, strobes, flashing beacons, CD sound system with amplifier, fog machine, special effects package, AND as if that wasn't enough, the complete Battle Station Arena (it's spectacular)!

"One very important fact distinguishes us from other laser tag manufacturers. . . we're not just retailers of equipment - we also operate our own sites."

Doug Wilson , Ascension Productions Inc.

Everything is included - there is nothing else to purchase and no leasehold improvements to do. The modular arena can be made any shape and size that an amusement facility requires. Installation is remarkably easy. The manufacturer's set-up crew completes it in only two days! The interior of the Battle Station is drenched in black light and florescent graphics. The game is fast-paced and the phasers talk to you during the game.

"Imagine this," says Doug Wilson of Ascension Productions, "No matter what your budget, no matter what size your FEC, you can now have a state of the art modular Lazer Runner Battle Station with all the extras set up on your site by our crew in just days. You can try our product to see if it's what you expected - if not, we'll remove it - no problem."

"Our product has been tested, re-tested and re-tested again to make certain it is user friendly and profitable! One very important fact distinguishes us from most other laser tag manufacturers. We operate our own sites. Not just one or two, we operate our own equipment in Lazer Runner sites all over the world. All are profitable!"

CALL FOR A TRY BEFORE YOU BUY APPLICATION FORM

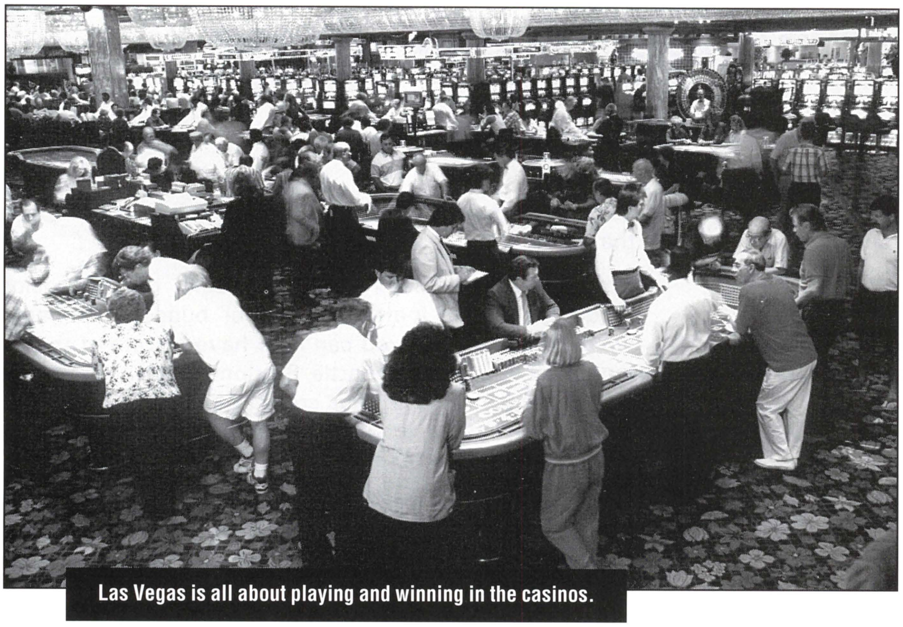
Family entertainment centers have been lining up to take advantage of this unprecedented offer. "Our phones have been ringing off the hook" says Doug Wilson. "No-one can believe that we actually let you try our Battle Station to see if it's all we say it is. All you have to do is call us for a Try Before You Buy Application form to take advantage of this fantastic offer."

You can even use the money you make in the 60 day trial period towards your down payment!

Once your application is approved, a Lazer Runner crew sets up your Battle Station and trains you on using the equipment. You then operate the system at your site for 60 days and decide if you want to purchase it. You can even use the money you make in the 60 day trial period towards your down payment.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO LOSE?

Lazer Runner bills itself as the fastest growing laser tag game on the planet. From large theme parks to small FECs, Lazer Runner laser tag systems are making their presence felt worldwide by opening a new site every day and a half. For more information on Lazer Runner and the Try Before You Buy Promotion, call Ascension Productions Inc. at (403) 496-9058 or Fax (403)496-9059.



Las Vegas is all about playing and winning in the casinos.

the Excalibur, Circus, and Treasure Island have the best arcades according to my resident nine-year-old expert on such things.

MGM Grand Adventures, Grand Slam Canyon, and Wet & Wild are all fun in a theme park setting. Of course, a trip up to the top of the Stratosphere Tower and the rides you'll find there are also a can't-miss for the strong of heart!

You've read my recommendations for a night on the town and can't wait to get started. But wait, what about the kids? No problem! Two properties that have excellent child care in the daytime or evening are Boulder Station and the Gold Coast. At Boulder Station, Kids Quest is a wonderland for youngsters. You can drop off your little ones for up to five hours and rest assured that they are being well taken care and having lots of fun while you're having dinner or trying your luck at the tables.

The same holds true for the Gold Coast kids care facility. There are more of these types of facilities planned for other casinos in town. Remember one rule concerning the under-21 crowd: though Las Vegas tolerates them walking through gaming areas, it does not tolerate them standing near these areas. You will be politely reminded of this rule should you forget!

I need a break

You've won so much money since you arrived that you need a break from all the lights, noise, and people. A trip to the mountains sounds good about now. The trip won't take you long. There's an inviting range of mountains to the west of Las Vegas. The Spring Mountains is the home of the Toiyobe National Forest, Spring Mountain, and Red Rock Recreation areas.

You may be thinking that lush, green forests and Las Vegas are about as far apart as ice and water. Au contrair. A short 35-mile drive is all it takes to transform you from the desert heat to the cool, sweet smelling forest. If you have a car, take US-95 north out of town, go about 10 miles where you'll pick up SR-156, and the desert will be history as you breath in the Ponderosa pine forest air.

By the time you reach the end of the road you will be at an elevation of 8,500 feet and be 30 degrees cooler. In October there may even be a bit of snow on the ground! At the end of SR-156 lies Mt. Charleston, Kyle Canyon, and the Charleston Lodge. The Charleston Lodge is a rustic, pine lodge that overlooks scenery straight out of the Rocky Mountains. You can have lunch or dinner and forget you're only 40 minutes away from the bright lights of Las Vegas (which you can't see from the lodge).

If you're even more adventurous, there are miles of trails that wind through the area. Even a few hundred feet will help work off your meal. You will also get a look at the many spectacular chalet-type homes built into the forest. After your lunch at the lodge, take the road back down a mile to SR-158 and follow it to Lee Canyon where even more spectacular views await you.

When the road ends you'll be at Lee Canyon ski area. Yes, you read right, skiing in Las Vegas. Though not in the class of the big Colorado, Utah, or California resorts, Lee Canyon ski area has enough terrain and snow during the winter to challenge even the most avid skiers. At times during the winter there is at least a four-foot base of snow. But in October, even if the snow has not started to pile up, you can still take the chair lift up to almost 10,000 feet and enjoy a breathtaking view!

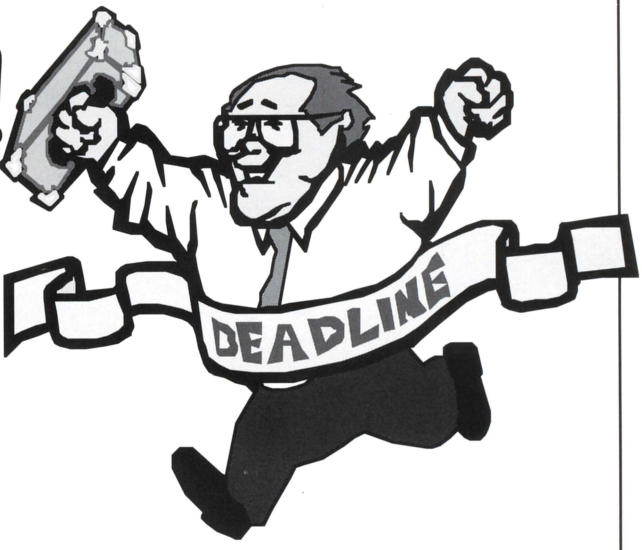
Sounds great but you're not into the 40 mile drive. Say you want to divert for an hour or so, we have something for you, too. Take a drive through Red Rock Canyon. Just follow Charleston Ave. west out of town and soon you will be driving into the beautiful Red Rock Recreation Area just 15 miles west of the strip.

A word of caution: be careful, this is an open range area for a heard of wild burros that roam through this area (no kidding). The entire drive with stops for pictures will take about an hour before you wind your way back to the southern side of Las Vegas.

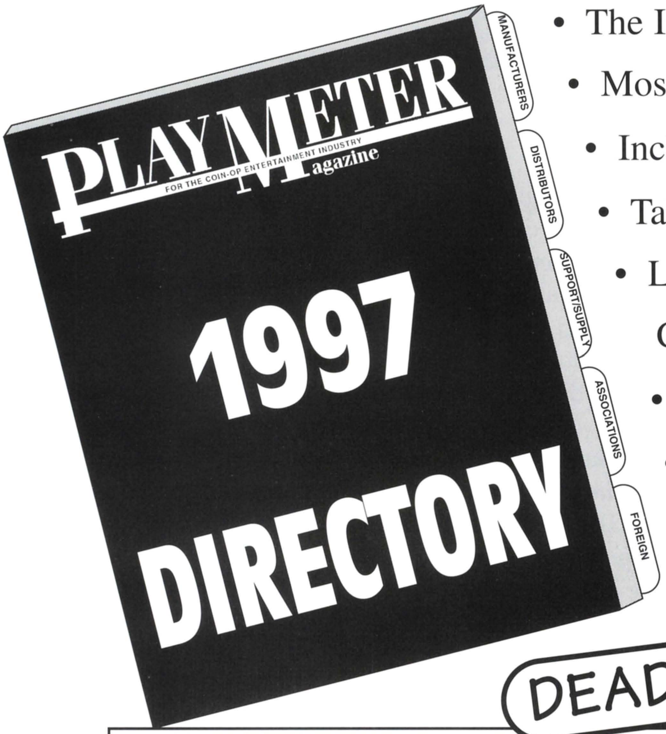
The weather

October is fall for us in the Las Vegas Valley. Expect daytime temperatures in the upper 70s and lower 80s

ADVERTISERS--It's Important!



Make the Ad Deadline for Play Meter's 1997 Annual DIRECTORY!


PLAY METER Magazine
FOR THE COIN-OP ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY
1997
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SUPPORT/SUPPLY
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FOREIGN

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Fractional Reservations	**Dec.4th**
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Full Page Reservation	**Dec. 16th**
Full Page Camera Ready Art	**Dec. 23th**

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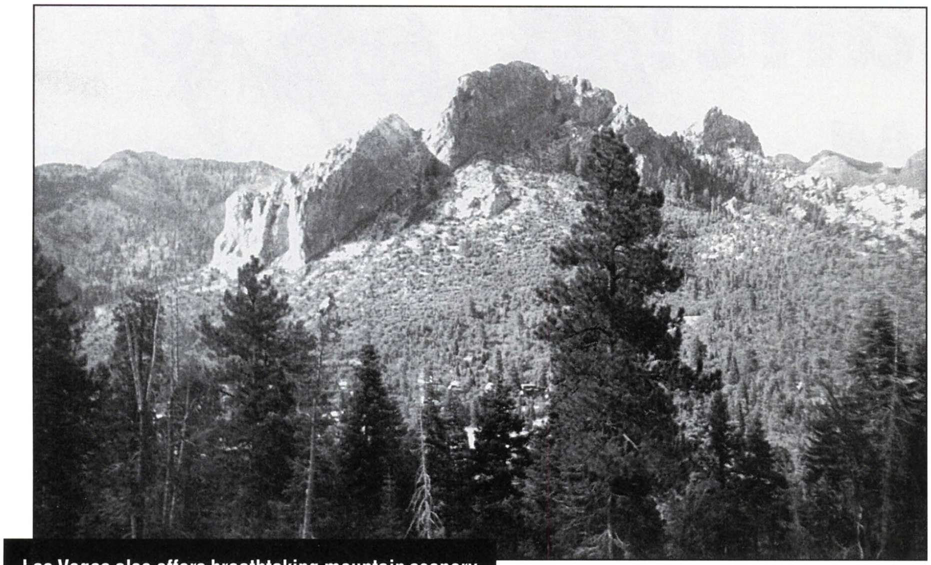
**Call early on Tab Cover Pages



Las Vegas also offers breathtaking mountain scenery for those who want to get away from it all.

while nights will be down in the 50s. Of course, we've been known to have our share of 90-degree weather in October along with the chance it may be in the 60s. You can always bet on sunshine, but be prepared for the wind. It's not just a "little" windy, it can make you wonder if a hurricane is brewing. But overall October is one of the more moderate months during the whole year.

Odds and ends

If you plan on playing slots or video poker, seriously consider joining the slot club at your favorite place. Even with moderate play, you will rack up points that can net you complimentary meals and with a little more play you may even rate some nice freebies. At any rate, by joining these clubs you will be assured a host of mail reminding you of Las Vegas and all the great deals the club is offering.

Many times, just by being a member, you may get special room rates, deals, and promotions for your next visit. If you're even a little bit more serious about your play at the slots, get to know the slot host, the pit boss of the slot area. If you're playing at a good rate, they have the ability to comp you various things. Each casino has its own policy on these comps. If your friendly slot host sees you a few times during your stay and knows you're playing well (win or lose) they will usually take care of you a little better.

Most of the casino workers make a large share of their salary in tips. Though the service in Las Vegas is world class, tip or no tip, most casino service employees make or break it on the tips they make.

Here's a tip that may save your life—literally! Never forget that pedestrians don't necessarily have the right of way on the strip. Though you may think like many other tourists that vehicles must stop when you decide to cross the street, this is seldom the fact. There are many folks driving on the strip who are in a hurry to get somewhere. They are not thinking of stopping for every tourist that decides it's time to cross the street.

I've seen visitors suddenly decide that it's time to cross the street. While five cars lock their breaks squealing to a stop in the nick of time, the visitor scratches his head wondering what the noise is all about!

Another tourist gaff is taking shots with a camcorder, while backing into the street! I will not quote you statistics on how many tourists get hit doing this, but take my word for it, it happens too often. Use common sense while walking around the strip and remember that Las Vegas is a city where people work and are often in a hurry. They may not have time to stop when someone walks in front of their car. In short, we love our tourists, preferably alive!

Shopping

The two shopping areas closest to the strip are the Fashion Show Mall and the Forum Shops at Caesars. At the Forum Shops you will find world class shopping, dining, talking statues, fountains, occasional celebrities, and lots of people watching.

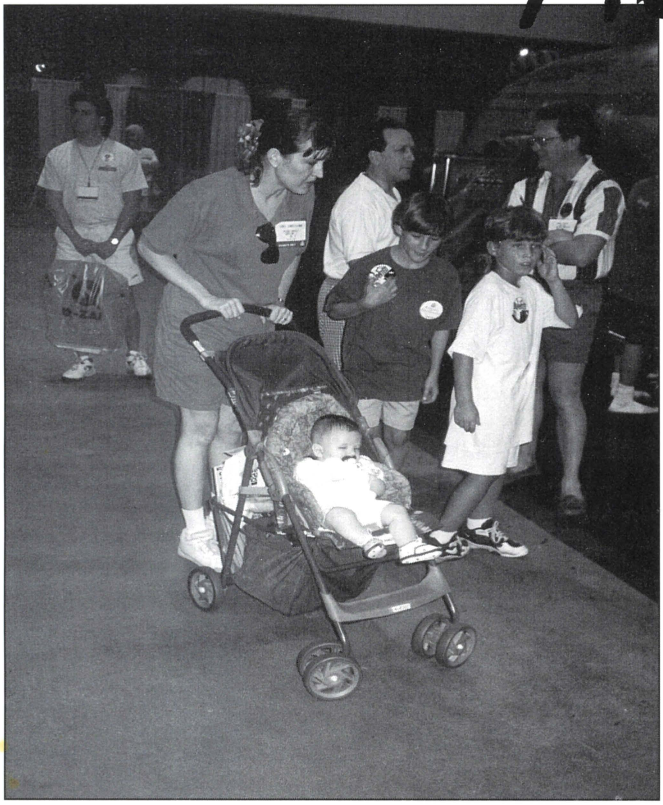
The Fashion Show Mall is a little less hectic, but has as many shopping opportunities in a more sedate setting. If Versace and Gucci are a bit above your budget, the Belz outlet mall two miles south of town on the strip offers many great bargains in a mall-type setting.

Have some fun

I haven't mentioned some of the obvious things you'll find simply because you can't miss them! You know like the volcano at the Mirage and the pirate ship battle at Treasure Island. The best way to check out the town is just walk and explore. You will find it safe and easy to do along the strip and downtown. You may even find an interesting place that us locals don't know about, but should!

Here's hoping you have not only a great time at the show, but when you go home, you can tell your unbelieving friends about the snowball fight you had in the mountains. ▲

Schedule of Activities



All educational sessions and most social events will be at the Sands Expo Center unless specified otherwise.

LEARNING

Business Forums

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9

8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

☞ **FEC Leadership Forum** (* not included in the Fun Pass): A full-day strategic planning program limited to 75 pre-qualified owners and primary decision makers.

Goal: To identify and prioritize key business issues, analyze current plans, create new plans to keep ahead of the curve, evaluate long-term options, motivate employees, and remove roadblocks to change.

Panel: Mike McKinley, Alive! Alive! Associates; Dennis McCulston.

☞ **FEC Development for Long-Term Success** (* not included in the Fun Pass): Owners, operators, consultants, and builders will share their expertise on the topics of business plans, financing, marketing, design and theming, location choice, and redemption.

Breakout sessions: Indoor and outdoor FECs and children's centers that "edutain."

Panel: Bruce Stockberger, Branding America.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10

8 a.m. - 11 a.m.

☞ **Marketing Workshop**—Maintaining Your Market Share (* not included in the Fun Pass): Teams of owners and managers with similar facilities compare strategies.

Goal: To discuss ongoing marketing plans, value-added services, improvements to existing programs, effective communications, and creativity.

Panel: Randy Thomas, Randy Thomas & Associates.

☞ **Amusement and Party Rental Business Forum** (* not included in the Fun Pass): Networking at its best with an interactive workshop that brings together colleagues from around the country.

Goal: To discuss the future direction of the industry in terms of safety, insurance, equipment maintenance, and training.

Panel: Mel Kleiman, Humetrics Inc.

8:30 a.m. - 10 a.m.

☞ **International FECs**—Gaining in the Translation: Tour FECs around the world and see what can be learned in the process.

Panel: Randy White, White Hutchinson Leisure & Learning Group; Scott Beatty, Recreational Designs; Enrico Banchi Jotta, Dinotropolis, Caracas, Venezuela.

8:30 a.m. - 11 a.m.

☞ **Successful Go-Kart Development**—Start Your Engines!: Find out what makes a winning track from the ground up, including permits, zoning, and track design.

Panel: Tim Sorge, Swings-N-Things Family Fun Park; Bill Beatty, Bill Beatty Recreational Design; Jerry Barton, Las Vegas Mini Gran Prix.

10:30 a.m. - Noon

☞ **Small Rides Equal Big Profits:** Learn how kiddie rides fit into the overall picture of customer perceived value and how to promote them to your best advantage.

Panel: Dean Bradley, Brad-Lea Meadows/Wheel's Inn; Stuart Heller, Kiddie Rides USA; and Mike Diener, JEMA Entertainment.

☞ **Interactive Sports:** Explore the latest in batting cages and simulators, with emphasis on pricing and promotion.

Panel: Marc Shade, Frappeurs Sports Center.

11:15 a.m. - Noon

☞ **Keynote Presentation:** How employees learn great customer service.

Speaker: Barry Eigen, Eigen & Associates.

1:30 p.m. - 3 p.m.

☞ **High Tech 2001:** Visionaries Speak: Developers consider space-age concepts in video, computer games, and simulation.

Panel: Louis Brill, Illuminations; Celia Pearce, Entertainment Venue Group; Mark Ward, Infotainment.

2 p.m. - 5 p.m.

☞ **Bowling Center Forum** (* not included in the Fun Pass): Progressive bowling center owners divulge what works for them as they incorporate family fun elements into their existing establishments. (Sponsored by Bowling Center Magazine.)

Panel: Roger Robinson, Friendly Fun Centers; Alan Crowne, Bowling Industry Magazine.

☞ **Go-Kart Business Forum** (* not included in the Fun Pass): Industry professionals cover operational matters, daily operations, and management in the first half. The second half covers risk management, loss control, insurance, and annual inspections.

Panel: Steven Hix, International Recreational Go-Kart Association.

☞ **Starting an Amusement Rental Business:** Parties, outings, play centers, and company picnics can mean added income.

Under discussion are games, rides, and inflatables; operations; staffing; traffic; and marketing.

Panel: Mitch Weinstock, Circus Time Amusements & Entertainment; Darrell Steffanini, Fun World Entertainment; Taj Jordan, Music on the Move Plus.

3:30 p.m. - 5 p.m.

☞ **How to Control the Weather—Special Events and Sponsorships:** Develop a plan to deal with slow traffic times by working creatively within your community.

Panel: Ed Pearson, Seattle Fun Plex; Rick Iceberg, C.J. Barrymore's; Philip DeAngelo, The Morey Organization.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11

8 a.m. - 11 a.m.

☞ **The Birthday Party Training Program:** Attend a live birthday party demonstration (8-9) plus presentations on themed parties (9-10) and marketing (10-11).

Panel: Jeremy Sage, Jeremy's Place; Frank Price, Stomping Ground Inc.; Debra Paulk, Festivities Publications; Scott Green, Jammin' Gym; Brett Eble, Gigglebees; Sue Archer, Wild Things; Kim Schmidt, Funtime Junction.

8:30 a.m. - 10 a.m.

☞ **Urban Entertainment Development—Partnering for Success:** Mixed-use developments can combine retailers, entertainment and amusement companies, film technology providers, and cities. See project prototypes and find out what role the cities play.

10:30 a.m. - Noon

☞ **New Anchor Strategies for Urban Entertainment Developments:** Learn more about the features of such facilities, what tenants look for, and how anchor facilities affect the project.

Panel: Andrew Halliday, Simon Property Group; Paul DeMyer, Rochlis, DeMyer & Rosen.

10:30 a.m. - Noon

☞ **Being a Great General Manager:** Gain insight on organizing, communicating, delegating, scheduling, supervising, and dealing with difficult customers more effectively.

Panel: Eddie Rider, RazzMaTazz Family Play Center; Tom Mullen, Capital Cages & Carts; Clifford Hay, Circus Circus Enterprises.

☞ **Viva La Coin-Op Revolution—Change is Good!:** Analysis of the costs, space requirements, advantages, and maintenance related to new coin-op technologies. (Sponsored by RePlay Magazine.)

Panel: Marcus Webb, RePlay Magazine; Dr. John Latta, 4th Wave Inc.; Steve Siegel, Powerplay Amusements; Richard Ditton, Incredible Technologies; James Plamondon, Microsoft Corp.

1:30 p.m. - 3 p.m.

☞ **Merchandise Management—Controlling Profit and Loss:** Protect your investment with a plan for the future of your redemption operation.

Panel: Gary Reedy, Planet Play and Centreville Mini Golf

& Games; Robert Vittitoe, Gekay Sales and Service: Karyn Gitler, ShowBiz Pizza Time Inc.

☞ **Laser Attractions:** More equipment and options are now available for this popular activity. Get up to speed on technology, programming, and staff training.

Panel: Vic Fortenbach, Vicco Electronics; Charles Stephens, FunTech Entertainment.

2 p.m. - 5 p.m.

☞ **Team Building Workshop** (* not included in the Fun Pass):

Find out how to use a succession management plan to attract and retain leadership talent, how to cut turnover costs, and how to foster individual responsibility.

Panel: Larry Johnson, Johnson & Associates.

☞ Roller Skating Forum—Strategically Planning Fun (* not included in the Fun Pass): Small group activities and open forum discussions will lead to a plan for family fun at skating facilities that must stay competitive. (Sponsored and moderated by the Roller Skating Associations.)

3:30 p.m. - 5 p.m.

☞ **Just the Facts Ma'am—ROI for Realists:** Here's a new weapon in the constant battle to generate revenue. See how reallocation of space usage can boost that revenue.

Panel: Frank Seninsky, Alpha Omega Amusements; Roger Robinson, Friendly Fun Centers; Steve Siegel, Powerplay Amusements.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12

8:30 a.m. - 10 a.m.

☞ **Soft Modular Play Structures—Learning the Ropes:** A big draw for kids that may or may not be right for you. Learn about the different kinds of structures and how to market and maintain them for long and safe use.

Panel: Larry Reed, Little Tikes/Omni; Gary Reedy, Planet Play and Centreville Golf & Games.

☞ **Risk Management for FECs—Setting Your own Safety Standards:** Valuable information will be dispensed regarding preventive maintenance and inspections of attractions, crisis management, and new laws and regulations.

Panel: Lary Zucker, IALDA; R. Wayne Pierce, Niles, Barton, & Wilmer; MaryLou Iverson, Tenderfun; Bob Gill, Bob Gill & Associates.

10:30 .m. - 11:20 a.m.

☞ **50 Ideas in 50 Minutes on Group Sales:** Get those notebooks ready to record suggestions on group sales, creating birthday party programs for groups of all ages, and identifying groups you may have overlooked.

Panel: Randy Thomas, Randy Thomas & Associates; Kenneth Roesel, Golden Skates.

10:30 a.m. - Noon

☞ **Adding Miniature Golf to the Mix—Going for the Green!:** Miniature golf in the '90s is more challenging and more interesting architecturally, but will it be appropriate for your facility? Get pricing information and general data on this activity.

Panel: Burdette Bremer, Castle Golf; Andrew Corbus, Hidden Cove Family Fun Park.

SOCIALIZING

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9

5 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Coin-Op Connection Reception sponsored by Play Meter Magazine at the Sands Expo Center (by invitation only).

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10

Party at the Hard Rock Cafe in the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino.

The price of $65 for adults and $35 for children under 16 includes transportation from the Sands Expo Center, hot and cold hors d'oeuvres, and an open bar until 8 p.m.

HONORING

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11

6:15 p.m.

Third Annual Golden Token Achievement Awards Reception at the Sands Expo Center.

Honors will be bestowed on the most creative individuals in the FEC business. Presentations will be made in the categories of "Best New or Renovated Facility" and "Best Customer Service," among others.

PLAYING

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12

8 a.m. - 10 a.m.

Field Trip to Circus Circus Hotel & Casino

See the mega-midway and redemption center and the Grand Slam Canyon Theme Park. Transportation from the Sands Expo Center is included in the $25 per person fee (free to Developer's Day registrants).

CONTRIBUTING/JOINING

Silent Auction

All day, every day, items will be on display at the entrance to the convention exhibit floor. Bid on games, rides, merchandise, supplies, and trade publications. Get a bargain while helping the International Association of Family Entertainment Centers continue to provide member services. If you have not signed on as a member yet, this is a great time to do it. ▲

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Activity: Games Inc.	7103	(805)383-0729
Actual Reality Intl.	1044	(403)440-3706
Adcap Line	7070	(704)283-2147
Advanced Games & Eng.	3058	(954)527-0907
Adventure Golf Services	5067	(616)922-8166
AIMS Intl.	7129	(708)516-0800
Air Dimensional Design	5132	(310)838-8823
Airspace USA	1118	(704)258-1319
Alinco Costumes	2139	(801)266-6337
Allied Specialty Insurance	5098	(813)367-6900
Alter Enterprises	5049	(201)616-1111
Amer-A-Can Consultants & Suppliers	6092	(407)894-5110
AAMA	4033	(847)290-9088
American Changer Corp.	6093	(954)772-5363
American Game Adventures	6139	(412)246-6794
American Locker Security Systems	6083	(716)664-9600
American Miniature Golf & Go Kart Track Construction	5133	(800)774-3101
Amusement Electronics	5029	(714)538-7118
Amusement Business	3054	(615)321-4254
Amusement Products	3099	(423)892-7264
Amusement Solutions	5088	(770)449-4033
Anchor Industries	6103	(812)867-2421
ARMS Intl.	4034	(908)262-9776
Ascension Productions	6045	(403)496-9058
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Brunswick Bowling & Billiards	3041	(616)725-4660
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Bullwinkle's Intl.	6085	(714)768-8111
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C & F Trading	2130	(770)457-0037
California Churros	5022	(213)669-4000
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Can-Am	3103	(800)338-1820
Cardxpress	1140	(908)356-7033
Carol Flemming Costume Design	6084	(209)728-2071
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Cash Box Intl. Magazine	2137	(612)545-0010
Castle Golf	6110	(602)968-1955
Challenger Industries	6094	(706)278-7707

Chance Rides	3017	(316)942-7411
Channel M	5137	(312)360-1300
Characters Unlimited	7126	(702)294-0563
ChatterBox	1128	(505)761-9901
Classic Games	1139	(319)373-1234
CM-300 Corp.	4001	(905)707-8787
Cobbs, Allen & Hall-Georgia, Inc.	6105	(770)394-2666
Coin Concepts	2027	(908)390-9009
Coin Mechanism	6111	(630)924-7070
Coin-Op Trader	7099	(602)939-1000
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Dan Brechner & Co.	4054	(516)767-6767
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Deltronic Labs	5072	(215)997-8616
Design Plus Industries	6066	(309)682-9359
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Dynamo	5048	(817)284-0114
Eastern Golf Corp.	5106	(717)689-0560
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Globe Ticket & Label 1063
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Gold Medal Products 1056
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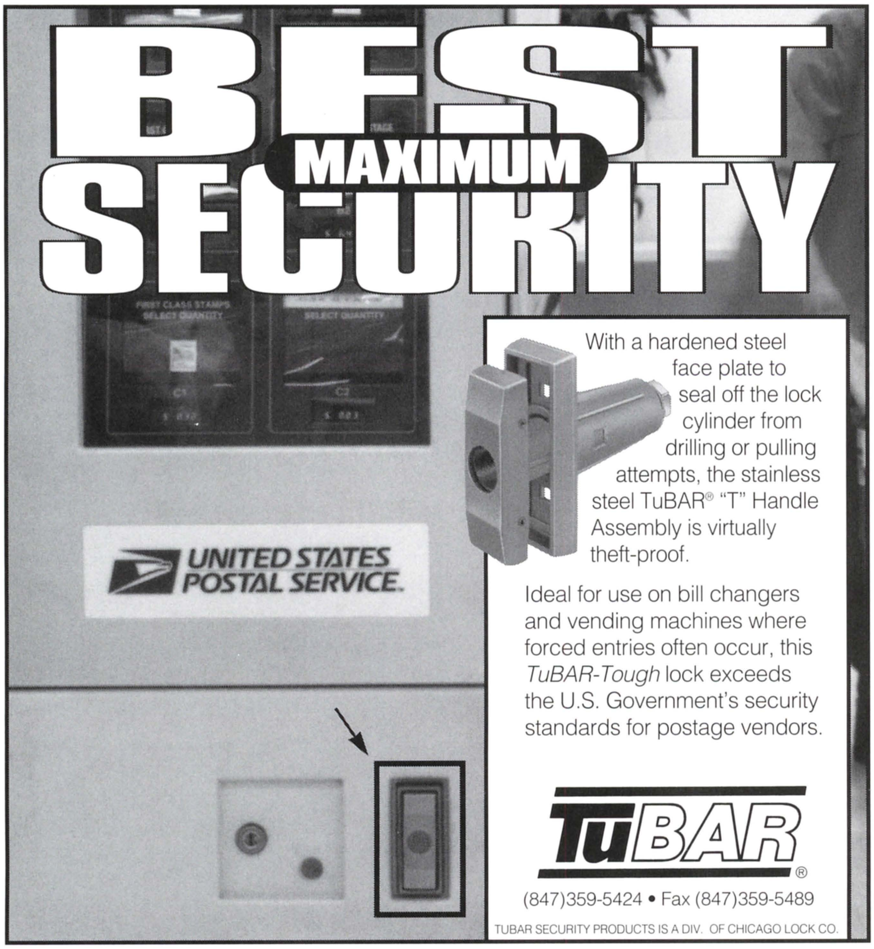
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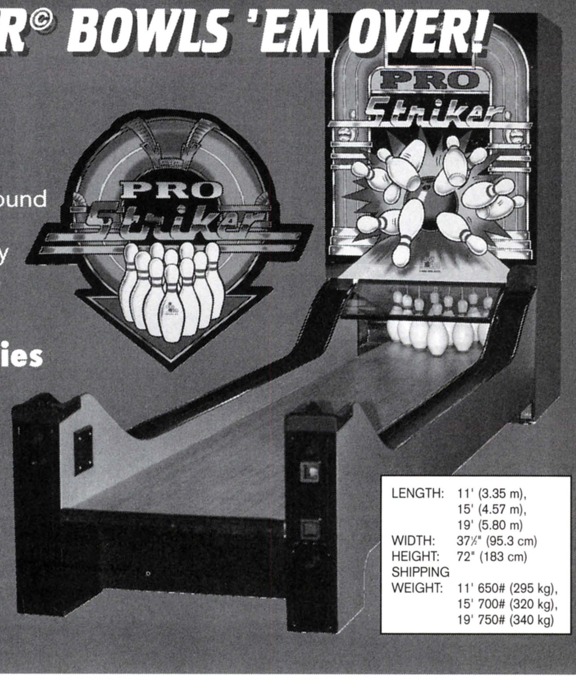

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The ATM Money Store	7085	(914)762-3875
The Step2 Company	1060	(216)656-0440
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Cleveland Coin's Jay Bender (r) shows the latest vending equipment to Michael Voinovich of Charisma Vending.

Shaffer's Dave Hesketh (l) and Dale Larcey (r) show off the Rowe *LaserStar Venus* to Billy Clum and Jeff McCune of J & V Coin and Nancy Westerhaus Baxter of Pioneer Service.

Anyone who thought state association shows ranked up there with electro mechanical pinballs in the contemporary category should have been in Columbus, Ohio, for the Ohio Coin Machine Association's 22nd Annual Expo.

OCMA named the event "A Recipe of Survival," and the numbers alone present a snapshot of how well received the show was: 36 booths (full capacity for the Ramada University Inn's Grand Ballroom), 20 varied exhibitors, 64 officially-registered operating firms, 82 executives and managers listening attentively to the technology seminar ("Networking Tournaments and the Future"), 18 technicians who took Randy Fromm's advanced three-day seminar, 39 golfers participating in the golf outing, and, in total, almost 200 industry members on hand to network and view the latest equipment.

Preliminaries began with the intense three-day technical school under the tutelage of Play Meter Magazine's Randy Fromm. Subjects included easy PC repair, ticket dispensers, redemption games, monitors, and lab repair.

The site of this year's traditional OCMA/Ed Shaffer Memorial Golf Tournament was the new and challenging Heritage Golf Club. Low gross honors went to Harlod Wallace of City Amusement Enterprise in Ironton, Ohio.

Show floor activities got underway Thursday evening and lasted throughout the following day, playing to a crowded ballroom. The adjacent River

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Room provided a relaxed and informal dining atmosphere.

The Friday morning breakfast meeting was highlighted by remarks from AMOA president Randy Chilton, a report by OCMA president Michael Zappa on his two-year term, various financial and committee reports, and the election of four directors to the OCMA board. They were: Phillip Elum of Elum Music, Daniel Harder of Shaffer Services, John Rizek of Big City Vending, and Don Wessels of Coin Systems Co.

These newly elected directors join holdover members of the board including chairman Jim Hayes of Gem Music, Evan Brown of B & B Music, Rodney Stebelton of Stebelton Music, Ryck Zarick of All Star Vending, Nancy Westerhaus Baxter of Pioneer Services, Kerry Shaffer of Shaffer Amusements, Larry Van Brackel of A. Van Brackel & Sons, and Michael Zappa of Lorain Music.

The technology seminar also held on Friday featured OCMA executive director David Corey as moderator and three coin-op executives as panelists: Gene Harlan of Arachnid, Michael Hanson of Incredible Technologies, and Marty Glazman of Williams.

Harlan spoke about the value of networking via telephone hook-ups, and Hanson discussed the success and future of IT's tournament system. Glazman reminded operators that they must become promoters and not just equipment movers, adding that manufacturers must also develop products that drive players and aid operators in this new role.

One final high point was the presentation of the OCMA President's Portrait by R.J. Reynolds' Terry Lee to Michael Zappa and the announcement of a newly-formed special committee, which will develop an OCMA scholarship program to be unveiled at next year's show.

All told, show organizers said, it was an exciting and action-packed show that both educated and inspired. ▲

Atlas DISTRI

At the Atlas booth, (l-r): Richard Zappa of Lorain Music, Randy Cesco of Atlas, Mary Zappa, OCMA president Michael Zappa, and John Coleman of Atlas.

Play Meter's Randy Fromm worked with 18 technicians in an intense three-day technical seminar.

AMOA president Randy Chilton chats with Steve Shaffer of Shaffer Distributing while Phillip Elum (l) of Elum Music and James Comella of Cadillac Music discuss matters on the show floor.

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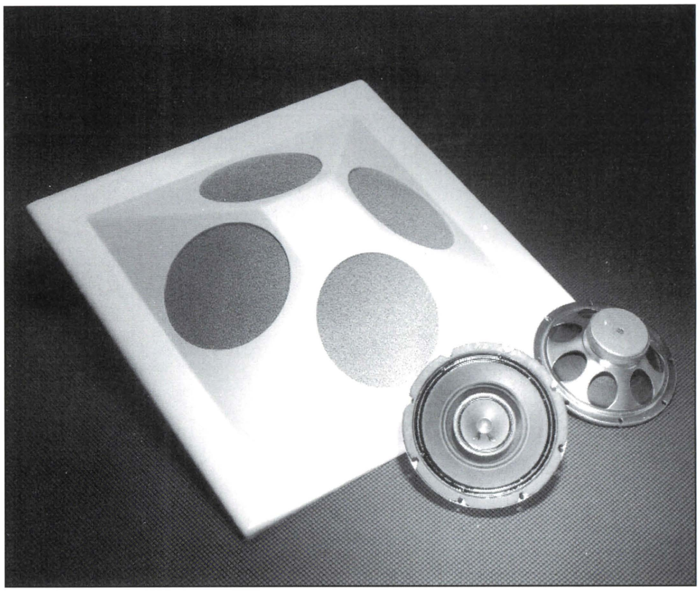

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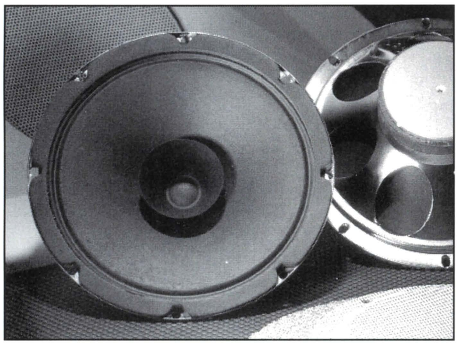

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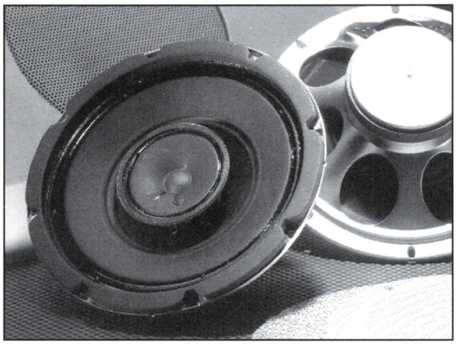

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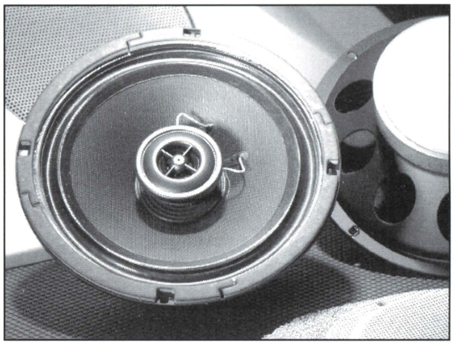

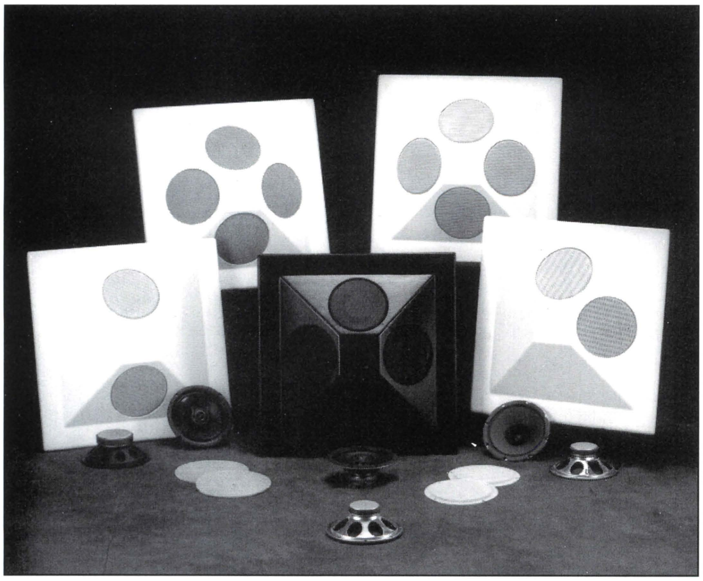

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Taking a look at your STAFF AND GIFT CERTIFICATES

VIC FORTENBACH

> *❝ As vital as customer service is to any business, it's something that has been sadly overlooked at many FECs that I have visited. ❞*

To the FEC manager, when a single customer or family of four enters your park, it's your job to make it as effortless as possible for them to "just have fun." They should forget that they haven't paid the electric bill or that the car needs a tune up.

They don't need to be reminded of the real world. They've come to your park for a fun experience they won't forget. If a customer has to squint to read the prices for a go-cart ride, or if he has to argue with the less than friendly cashier that he was overcharged, he is not having fun.

As vital as customer service is to any business, it's something that has been sadly overlooked at many FECs that I have visited. Little things that will cost you very little but have big returns are what you need to focus on! Have one of your staff walk around the park two or three times a day, assisting those who may have questions or helping someone in need.

Employee morale is vital to the whole customer service concept. If your employees are not happy, then that "thought" will get picked up by your customers. An unhappy employee cannot fake enthusiasm. You must keep your staff happy so they'll really enjoy working there. If they aren't happy, talk to them and find out why.

Plan monthly meetings with your staff and not only let them express their feelings, encourage them to. If they are comfortable telling you what's wrong, you're doing a good job! If you have an open mind and are willing to make changes based on their ideas, then you're doing an even better job.

Plan a outing for your staff to the bowling center or a company party at a restaurant to show your employees how important they are to you. Sure the company party might cost a bit, but the rewards of a happy staff and, in return, great customer service will far outweigh the cost.

An "Employee of the Month" program works great, but it should be based on something exceptional the employee did. If you simply "pick" someone the program won't work. The employee won't know what he did right and the other employees won't know either.

For example, base the employee of the month program on increased sales for their shift or for a suggestion about how to make the park better. The program must have a goal and it must have rewards. While a nice wooden plaque is great, money is not. Give away movie passes or a dinner for four at a nice restaurant.

The goal is to make your employees feel that the job they do for you is worth it and you appreciate it. Don't discount a simple thanks; it works wonders.

A suggestion box is a must for both your customers and employees. Place the box where it's easily seen. Next to the box have a supply of paper and a pencil or pen on a string so it won't walk off. Make it easy for your customers and employees to use it. If you want to compile a mailing list, do it separately; the suggestion box is only for suggestions and anonymity is welcomed.

Park cleanliness should be high priority. If you see a candy wrapper on the floor, pick it up. Don't wait for the janitor. Teach your staff to be conscious of doing little things like picking up that candy wrapper. Set an example. If they see how adamant you are about doing things, your example will be evident. All of you are there to make your customers' day a memorable one.

Trust your staff. If you feel like you can't, then it could be your problem, not the staff's. Treat them with respect. Don't post the money shortages for each employee for all to see, emphasizing that they made a mistake. Talk to that employee in private and show that you are concerned. If an employee has constant shortages then there is a bigger problem than a few mistakes.

Overages should be treated with the same concern as shortages. You certainly don't want your customers to be shorthchanged.

In some FECs the snack bar is a secondary element. You need it, but if it's not handled properly it can be a nightmare. Overall, your customer is tops and that means at the snack bar as well. It may be a secondary element, but you don't want your customers to know that. They should be treated fairly, offered quality items, and have a clean place to eat.

Gift certificates: a great promotion

What makes a great gift, is easy to give, and does not wear out? An FEC gift certificate! Gift certificates are a great way to promote your park, but there are a few guidelines that need to be followed when making gift certificates available to the public.

Your gift certificates should be multicolored with your park's color scheme. Using your colors makes them visually identifiable with your FEC and makes them look valuable—exactly what you want them to think! Besides not looking valuable, single-colored gift certificates are too easy to copy.

If you have a park logo or mascot be sure to display it promptly right front and center on the certificate. Print a sequential number on each certificate for security purposes.

Once a certificate is sold, write the number on a master sheet. When that same certificate is redeemed, mark it "redeemed" on the same master sheet. Destroy the redeemed certificates so they will not be recycled. This will prevent most theft.

Each gift certificate should be printed on a heavy stock in different colors, one for each denomination, and sized at approximately three inches by seven inches. Each gift certificate should be printed with one of the following denominations: $5, $10 or $20; $1 gift certificates are not advisable, unless you have several $1 attractions at your park that you are promoting.

You could make special gift certificates for two go-kart rides or four games of miniature golf. Use your imagination or ask your employees for suggestions. There should be a place for the manager of the park to sign and write an issue date. The words "valid 90 days from issue date" should already be printed on the front. A place for the date and the signature of the employee who redeemed the certificate should also be included.

The time frame to redeem the gift certificates should be short; I recommend 90 days, but six months is OK. You don't want a gift certificate popping up a year later. Gift certificates should be treated like money. In fact, you should keep several gift certificates of each denomination in the cash drawers so purchasing one is not a hassle for you or your customer. Keep a record of the numbers in the cash registers so if there is a theft, you'll know which certificates NOT to redeem.

Just a note. Don't use your gift certificates for promotional prizes; consider them money. If you want to give out promotional prizes, have some preprinted passes or some other type of giveaway.

Do some promoting of your gift certificates, beginning with attractive posters adorning the walls of your FEC. They should be posted around the game center informing your customers that you have gift certificates available for sale.

Advertise the fact that you have gift certificate available. A simple way is having the redemption and snack bar staff ask each customer if they would like to purchase a gift certificate.

Don't discount the gift certificate because it diminishes their perceived value. Since the gift certificates are printed and cut to size, you can save money by purchasing a large quantity, about 1,000 of each denomination. Make the certificates available throughout the year, but try to increase the sales during the holidays. ▲

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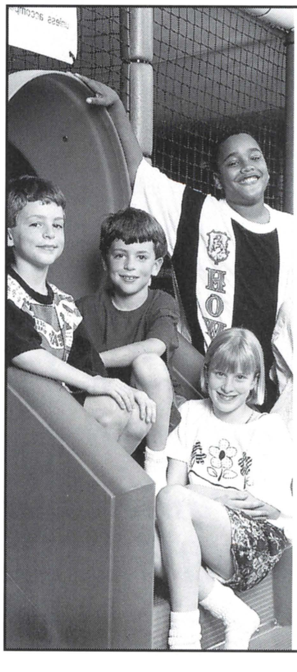

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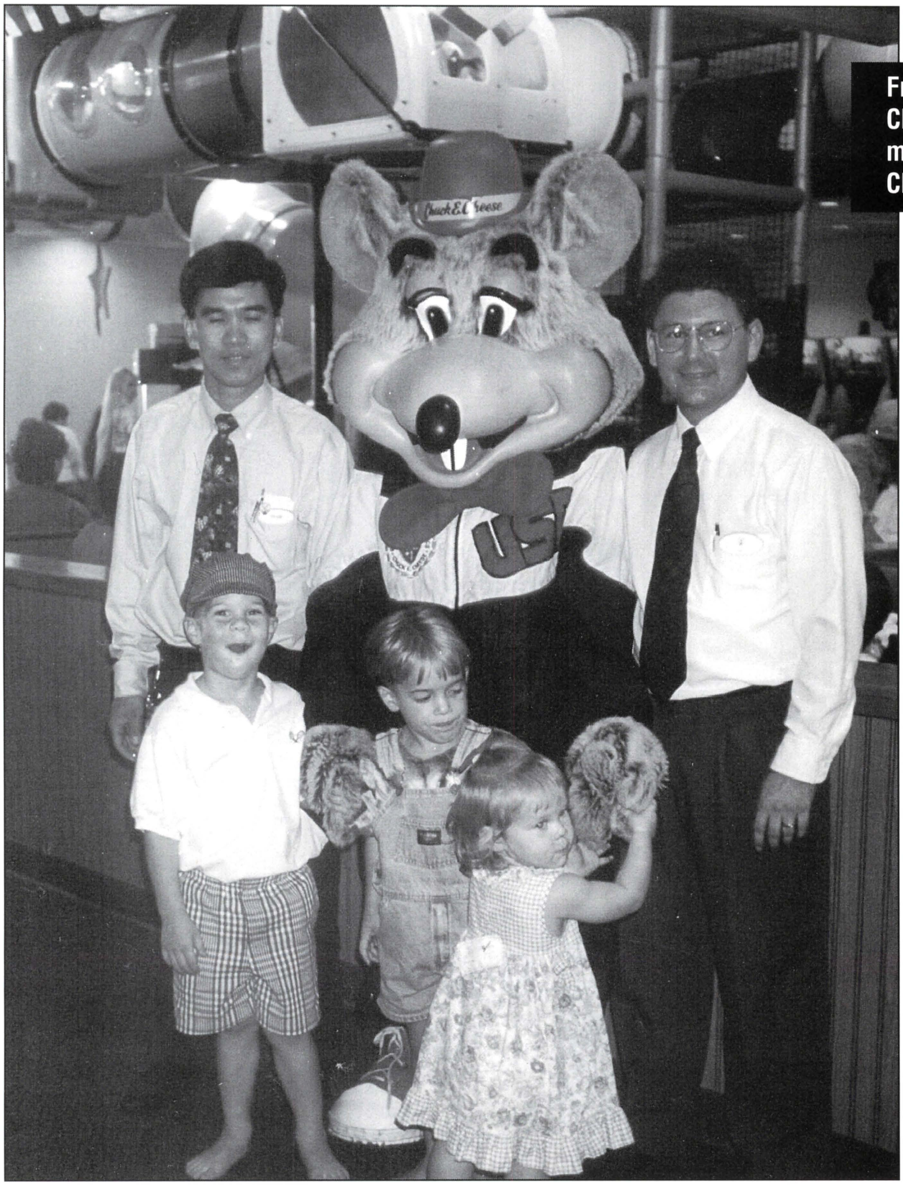


From left: technician Thanh Tran, Chuck E. Cheese himself, assistant manager Ed Crawford, and a trio of Chuck E.'s young fans.

If you have not been to a Chuck E. Cheese's family restaurant and fun center lately you are in for the proverbial treat. A remodeling program underway will upgrade all 316 facilities around the world.

BONNIE THEARD

It is a typical hot and humid weekday in August but the weather is of no concern to the bustling crowd of young children moving from kiddie rides to redemption games to the Skytubes at the Chuck E. Cheese's at 7000 Veterans Blvd. in Metairie, La.

This store opened in 1981 in the heyday of videos. A lot has changed since then, although the animated floor show is still in place with updated characters. Several large monitors onstage play sports bloopers in between the animated entertainment headlined by Munch's Make Believe Band.

The once closed-in elevated portion of the restaurant area has been opened for viewing of both the floor show and the games and rides. In addition, more booths accommodate patrons next to the Skytubes soft modular play attraction. The former quiet room/sports room at the front of the store is now occupied by videos, and the addition of large windows at the entrance creates a spacious feeling inside.

"The architects pushed for more natural light for security reasons," said Ed Crawford, the assistant manager who has been with the chain for 10 years, eight of them in his current post.

On this day Crawford was welcoming a crowd of youngsters from summer camp. He believes in a positive attitude, whether in regard to his young customers: "Here, every kid is a winner," or the staff: "We stress a happy atmosphere for our employees."

He was gearing up for a busy weekend, he said, "when this whole place is nothing but parties." Soon Chuck E. Cheese himself appeared to mingle with the children. "Chuck is always here;" said Crawford, "a lot of kids come to see him."

Crawford is proud of the renovation of the 14,000-square-foot building, which was finished in May. "We hear a lot of comments from parents saying they like it here because it's safe," he said.

We checked with Gene Cramm, senior vice president/director of entertainment and games at Chuck E. Cheese's parent company ShowBiz Pizza Time Inc. in Irving, Texas, to learn more about the revamping of the company's 225 corporate locations and 91 franchises.

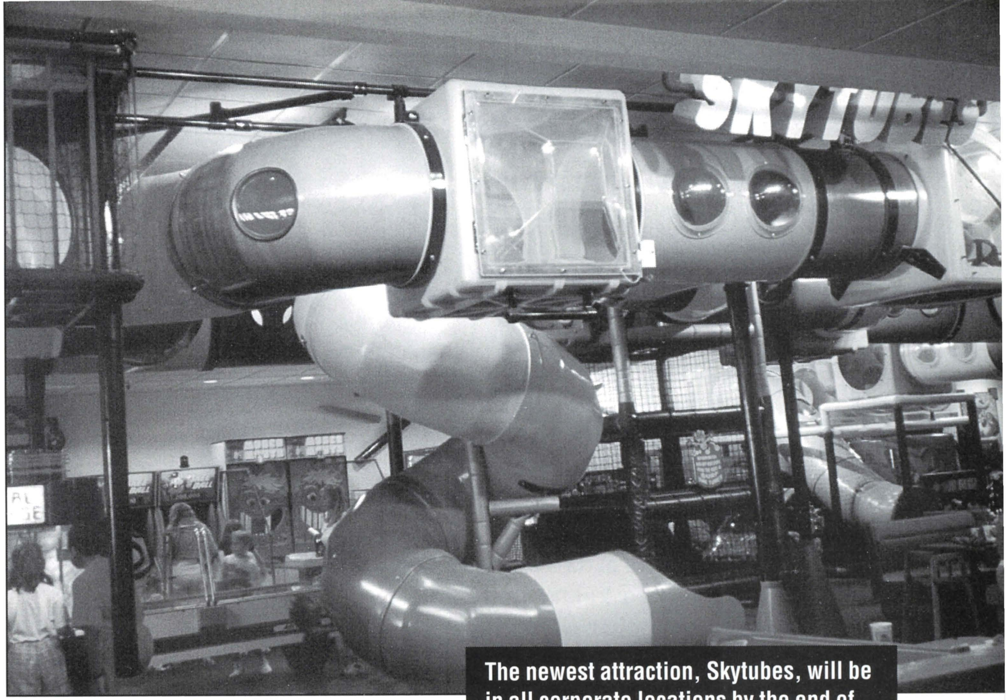
To stay in touch with its franchises, the company hosts an annual spring franchise show, this year held close to company headquarters at the Hilton Hotel near the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport.

In his 16 years with ShowBiz, Cramm has witnessed a host of changes in the family restaurant and fun center business. ShowBiz has stayed true to its core market of families with children aged two to 11, changing when needed to remain fresh and appealing.

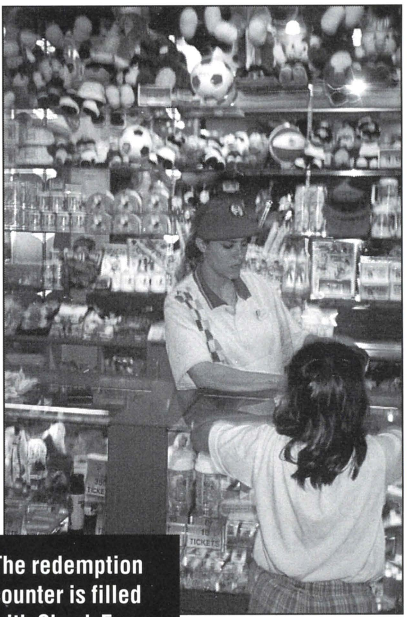
As Cramm put it, "With remodeling we see new activity and enthusiasm. As the cost of retail space continues to go up we must maximize the retail space available."

He gives a nod to Paul Teneyuca and Tom Ward for their assistance in keeping Chuck E. Cheese's on top. Teneyuca, the director of installations responsible for technical support, has coordinated the remodeling program. Ward, manager of game operations including floor layouts, has worked closely with manufacturers and distributors in game placement. Both Teneyuca and Ward have been with ShowBiz for 15 years.

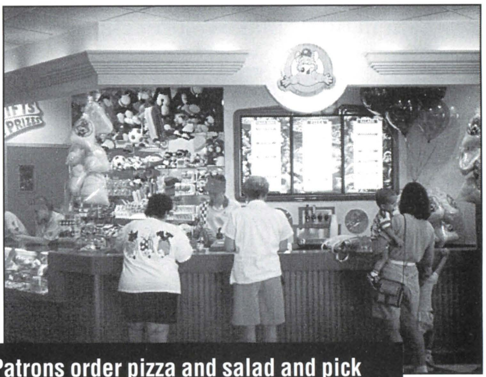
Cramm noted, "Our long-term employees make this company stable and really help us continue to move it forward. We're having one of our best years since 1992."



The newest attraction, Skytubes, will be in all corporate locations by the end of the year.



The redemption counter is filled with Chuck E. Cheese's-emblazoned prizes, T-shirts, stuffed animals, and toys.



Patrons order pizza and salad and pick up their tokens at the front desk.

The Aug. 12 edition of *Nation's Restaurant News* reported that ShowBiz profits were up 435 percent for the first six months of 1996. "This is the third consecutive quarter in which sales and earnings have improved over the prior year," said company chairman and chief executive Richard Frank.

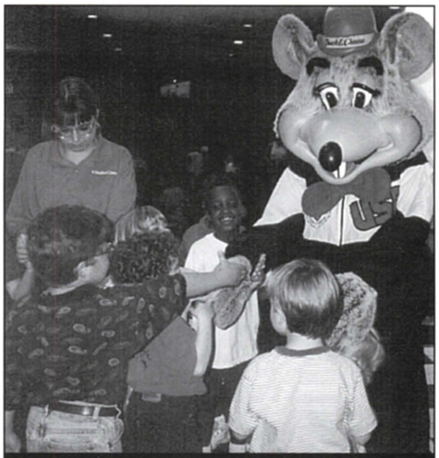
Among the reasons cited for the increase were upgrading the stores (exterior and interior) and adding value meal combinations that often include game tokens.

ShowBiz chief financial officer Larry Page was quoted: "The return on investment through additional sales and customer visits are coming in much faster than we had anticipated."

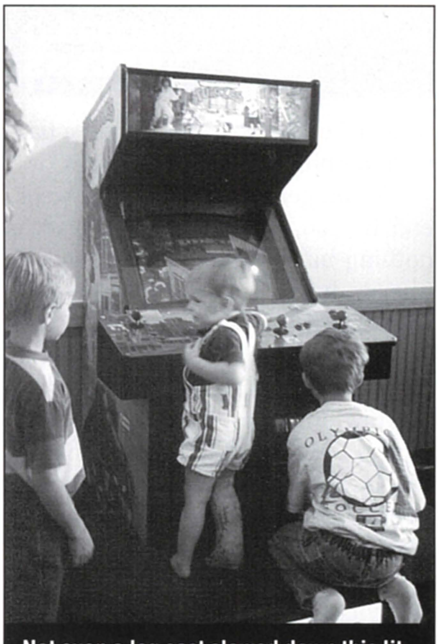
One of the major changes is the Skytubes attraction that dominates the main room at the Metairie location. This element will be incorporated into all company-owned units by the end of the year, according to Cramm. "The franchisees are moving at their own pace," he said, "but we are very pleased with the amount of interest and revisions that franchisees are making.

"We developed our proprietary Skytubes concept in late 1994 in conjunction with Soft Play Inc. of Charlotte, N.C. Through a team effort with them we have entered into a partnership and have since been rolling out the Skytubes concept."

How important is the new element? "It was our opportunity to enhance the overall experience at Chuck E.



Chuck E. Cheese shakes hands with admirers.



Not even a leg cast slowed down this little tyke determined to play videos.

Cheese for the kids and their parents," said Cramm. "The Soft Play unit has met all of our expectations."

Another area where expectations have been met and exceeded is the food service. "That's an evolution that has been going on for several years," said Cramm. "We've continued to enhance our salad bar and the pizza product." (The chocolate-iced fudge brownies are highly recommended too!)

One thing that has stayed the same for the past seven years is the slogan: "Where a kid can be a kid." Family packages appeal to budget-conscious parents and promise "big grins, little prices."

While the atmosphere is fun, it is also safe and secure. This feeling has been reinforced with Kid Check, a system that makes sure children who come with an adult leave with that adult. Cramm added, "It allows us to monitor who's coming in and who's leaving the facility. This has been a very good addition to our concept." At the Metairie location Kid Check was instituted over three years ago.

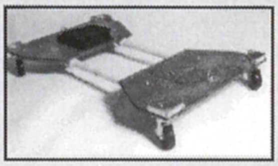
Said Cramm: "Parents are looking for a wholesome family environment and we certainly have a place where we provide that."

What else is on the horizon? "We're moving into the pinball arena now," said Cramm, "because the game maintenance has improved and we don't see anything graphically unpleasing to the adults. We are acutely aware of violent game content. Pinball is a new focus for us."

Also new is the Web site initiated by the company's marketing department (www.chuckecheese.com). "We're just now beginning to look at it and see what the opportunities are," concluded Cramm.

Expansion is a continuing process, with the latest international location opening in Santiago, Chile. On Aug. 6 ShowBiz announced the signing of a letter of intent to purchase the 19 restaurants owned by its largest franchisee, McBiz Corp. of Topeka, Kan. The terms include a 49 percent minority interest in one restaurant operated as a joint venture by the two companies.

ShowBiz president Michael Magusiak stated: "McBiz has been an excellent franchisee with experienced operators and we are excited about the potential of these becoming company restaurants." When completed in September, the transaction will bring the company-operated restaurants up to 244. ▲



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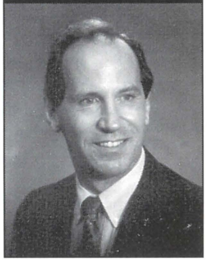

TOM FRICKE

You should have seen my son's expression when I told him that the law treats the award of free games as a crime—sometimes. He had this look of disdain that he uses to let you know that you aren't getting away with your attempt to fool him. He doesn't appreciate it when you try to put one over on him. After all he's 15. It didn't help when I started explaining the thinking behind the leading cases on pinball, video poker, free games, and confiscation. Half way through he was positive I was making it up to spoof him. So let me try to explain it to you. Maybe I'll do better.

In the first of a series of articles, our legal expert Tom Fricke tackles the sticky issue of how state laws view the awarding of free games.

Gambling has three elements: consideration, chance, and prize. Take away any one element and what is left is no gamble. Are free games a prize? My gut tells me they aren't. The high courts in some of the states feel the same way. However, there are plenty of jurisdictions where the rationale which became court-made law was this: by paying to play the first game you have established that replays have value. Therefore, they are enough of a prize to satisfy the third element of classic gambling. Court decisions like that made a lot of people go out and find a good lobbyist.

You can see the results on this table I have put together. About half of the states have some sort of statutory exemption from their gambling laws for games which award only replays and involve mostly chance in their operation. Apparently, it wasn't that hard to convince half of the state legislatures that free games are harmless and should be allowed, regardless of someone's theory about the elements of gambling.

Now comes the part when my son's look of disdain became a look of intense disdain. If free games aren't a prize and a machine which offers free games isn't a gambling device, then it should be OK to count the games, right? Wrong. If you count the games, say the courts, it's gambling. (There's no sense in trying to do anything about this rule. There is a broad consensus that a device which records the cancellation of free games is a gambling device for that reason alone.) Here's the explanation of this surprising rule, supplied by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

"Although a free game in and of itself does not constitute a reward, other characteristics can be taken to constitute a sufficient reward...The ability to knock-off free games, the presence of meters to enable the owner to determine how many games were knocked-off, the ability of the player to hold a part of his previous play over to the next game in order to increase his or her chances of winning a higher pay-off on the next game, and the extremely short playing time involved compels the conclusion that the reward of a free game constitutes a thing of value...None of these features is necessary to the functioning of the device as a legitimate profit making amusement game. Rather, they provide circumstantial evidence which we believe establishes by a preponderance of the evidence a sufficient re-

STATE	EXCEPTION APPLIES TO		REQUIREMENTS FOR EXCEPTION				REMARKS
	PINBALL ONLY	ALL FREE PLAY	GAME LIMIT	CANCELLATION PROHIBITED	RECORDING PROHIBITED	ADDITIONAL PAYMENT ALTERS ODDS	
ALASKA		X	none	yes	no	not prohibited	
ARIZONA		X	none	no	yes	not prohibited	
ARKANSAS		X	25	no	no	not prohibited	
CONNECTICUT	X		none	no	yes	not prohibited	
FLORIDA		X	15	yes	yes	not prohibited	
GEORGIA		X	none	yes	no	not prohibited	must involve skill
ILLINOIS		X	none	no	no	not prohibited	must involve skill
INDIANA	X		none	no	yes	not prohibited	applies to pinball and similar
IOWA		X	none	yes	yes	prohibited	
KANSAS		X	none	yes	yes	prohibited	
KENTUCKY	X		30	yes	yes	not prohibited	Statute defines "gambling device"narrowly
LOUISIANA		X	15	yes	yes	prohibited	
MICHIGAN		X	15	yes	yes	not prohibited	
MISSISSIPPI	X		none	no	no	not prohibited	
MINNESOTA		X	none	yes	yes	not prohibited	prohibitions apply only to gambling - look and no-skil games
MISSOURI		X	none	no	no	not prohibited	1) Replay not exchangeable for anything else; 2) Court Decision imposes game limit
NEBRASKA		X	none	yes	yes	not prohibited	
NEW YORK			n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Unique restriction-see note *
NORTH CAROLINA		X	8	no	no	not prohibited	
OREGON		X	none	yes	yes	n/a	Also prohibits free replay videos that similar to casino games, bingo or Keno
TEXAS		X	none	no	yes	not prohibited	
UTAH		X	none	no	yes	not prohibited	
WASHINGTON	X		none	no	yes	not prohibited	
WISCONSIN		X	none	no	yes	not prohibited	

NOTE *: New York prohibits "games commonly associated with activities such as poker, blackjack and dice", with free play for a reward. Thankfully, the prohibition applies only to alcohol venues.

ward to meet the third element of the test for a gambling device per se."

The statutes offer a broad variety of definitions of what is prohibited as a gambling device. One common definition is simply a device usable in playing phases of gambling activity. Another definition is a device that for consideration awards value as the result of chance. None of them say that by keeping a record of something that isn't a prize, you somehow transform your device into one which dispenses a prize. Why not take a step back and consider this question: should gambling devices be prohibited at all? It's gambling that is prohibited really, and gambling can be clearly defined. But gambling devices can't be clearly defined.

Anything, anything at all, can be used as a gambling device. For example, a dishonest person may lay stakes against his fellows as to whose lump of sugar a fly will first alight upon. Then, unbeknowst to the others, he may moisten his lump prior to the time all the bettors place their lumps of sugar on the table. Of course, the fly is mostly likely to alight first on the moistened lump.

So it is with video poker. Hundreds of opinions of courts and attorneys general have said to us: "We know that were it possible to count the free games, someone would be tempted to use this capability to pay off the games under the table. So if you can count the free games, it will be presumed that you are breaking the law, even if there is no actual gambling."

That's how it came about that we have to cope with state-by-state requirements, variously setting limits on the number of free games that can be awarded, prohibiting the cancellation of free games after they are won, prohibiting the recording of games cancelled, and prohibiting game features which would allow the player to choose, say, between a 25-cent game for a possible 10 credits or a 50-cent game for a possible 20 credits. Some go as far as to restrict the artistic content of the game.

The table will give you some idea of the differences between the states. The table doesn't tell the whole story. It's only what's in the text of the laws. It doesn't tell you how the laws have been interpreted by the courts and attorneys general. It doesn't tell you about the other half of the states, where statutes are silent concerning free games and video poker. There we have to find the law the hard way by reading the courts' opinions. What a mess. ▲

Tom Fricke is a St. Louis-based attorney who specializes in issues affecting the coin-op industry. He reminds readers that his column is commentary and not legal advise.

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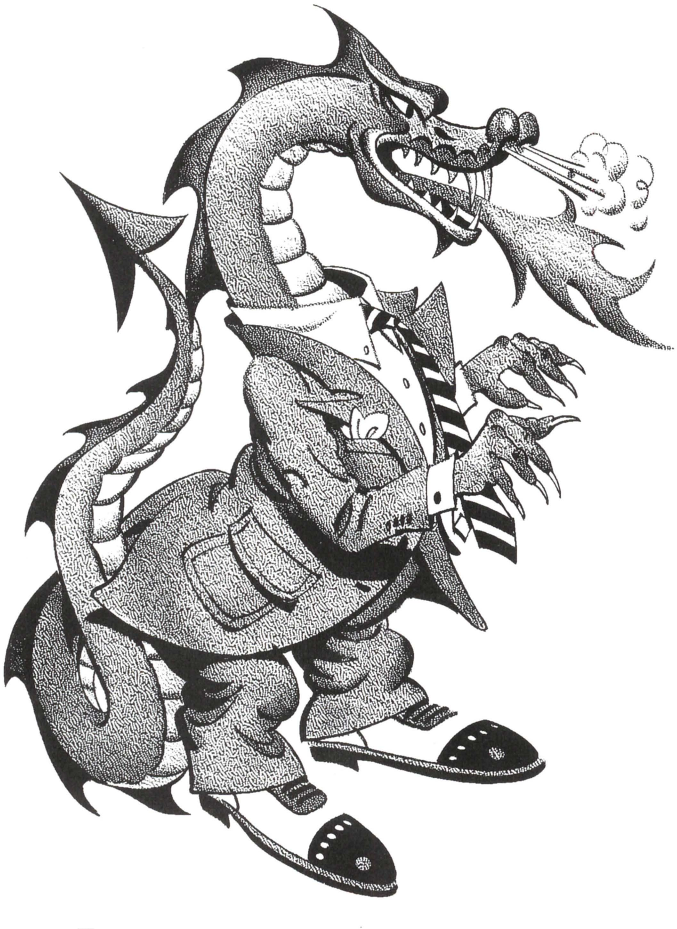
TAX TIPS

Slay the dragon of fears: taxes and losing control

IRVING BLACKMAN



In the mid-1950s I had my first consultation with a closely held business owner who had the its-time-to-transfer-my-business-to-the-kids itch. And one thing is certain. Nothing has changed.

The two biggest transfer fears of the '50s are still going strong in the '90s. What are they? Here's a hint. The number two fear is taxes, estate taxes that is. And the all-time number one transfer-to-the-kids fear?...Control! Yes, and get this, almost all owners (19 out of 20 to be exact) are frozen with fear when it comes to passing control to their own flesh and blood. So much so that many go to the big business in the sky and force their surviving families to overpay their estate tax. Why? Well, they held control (over 50 percent) of the business' common stock right up to the day they died.

But there are little-known, yet easy, ways to beat both fears. We use them year in and year out, and in consultation after consultation. Here's an example.

The owner (Joe) turns all of his stock (common) in to the corporation and takes back two types of common stock in exchange—voting common (say 100 shares) and nonvoting common (say 9,900 shares). This transaction is tax-free and works for both C corporations (tax-paying) and S corporations. Joe then sells (rarely) or gives (the method used most often) the nonvoting stock to his kids over a period of years. Joe can own as little as one percent of all the stock (100 shares of voting stock) and still retain 100 percent of the voting control. Just what he wanted—low value, high control. No fears. Perfect!

Once the control issue is out of the way, my experience shows that owners of family businesses immediately want to learn more about transferring their businesses to the kids. Then the tax planning really gets exciting because we show them how to pass all of their wealth—intact—to their family.

Want to learn more about how to transfer your business? Send for the companion special reports, "Transfer Your Corporation To The Next Generation Tax Free," "Transferring Your Business When You Have Two Or More Children," and "How To Beat The Estate Tax Legally."

The entertainment tax game

Here's a scenario that applies to almost everyone in the business world: You take your best customer and his spouse to a local sporting event...a good entertainment deduction, right? Wrong. It's incredible how many business people lose deductions that they would have sworn were good.

Even if you do everything 100 percent right, the tax law allows you to deduct only 50 percent of the entertainment cost. What happens if you don't do everything right as far as the IRS is concerned? The examining agent can, and usually does, reduce your deduction to zero. That's what happened in the following case.

A Classic IRS Win: A company (Danville) took some customers to enjoy the Super Bowl. There were no arrangements for business activity, and no formal business discussions took place. The IRS disallowed any deductions, and the court agreed (Danville Plywood Corp. vs. U.S., 3/31/89, 89-1 USTC 9248). The directly related rule is that the entertainment must always be directly related to, or associated with, the conduct of your business tripped up Danville.

The whole deduction could have been saved. All the taxpayer had to do was hold a bona fide business meeting before or after the game. Then, the Super Bowl and related expenses would have been associated with the conduct of the company's business.

A Classic Taxpayer Win: The taxpayer (United) entertained clients in New Orleans, Puerto Rico, and Las Vegas. The clear business purpose was to introduce real estate professionals to its insurance products. Formal business meetings were held at each location. The court allowed most of the expenses as a deduction. The trips were directly related to United's business because the guests were involved in at least one formal business meeting on each trip (United Title Insurance Co., TC Memo 1988-38).

There is no reason to lose a deduction when you are spending money to entertain customers. When the entertainment location or activity is not conducive to business, arrange for a business discussion before or after the activity. In other cases, build the business-related activity into the overall time frame. Make up a program and agenda that shows the main purpose for the trip is business.

Here are the simple rules to follow to make every entertainment expenditure deductible:

1. Before or after the entertainment activity, have a bona fide business discussion.
2. Document the business portion.
3. Avoid mixing non-business guests with business-related people.

Want to learn how to win the travel and entertainment tax game? Send for the companion special reports, "The Complete Guide To Building Your Entertainment Deductions," "Travel Deductions," and "Automobile Deductions."

The basics of gift giving and beyond

It's really a simple question: Would you rather have your wealth stay in your family or find its way to the IRS? One way of keeping it in the family is to use gifts to the hilt.

Sure, almost everybody knows you can give $10,000 per year to as many donees as you like. Double it to $20,000 if you're married. Basic stuff. But there's much more. First, let's look at educational expenses and medical expenses and the so-called unlimited gift-tax exclusion.

Let's see how it might work in a real-life scenario. Joe and Mary have a granddaughter (Sue) who is about to enter an expensive eastern college. She's a good kid, with two feet on the ground and most of all, Joe and Mary trust her. For starters, they write Sue a $20,000 check early in each calendar year.

Now, let's look at the unlimited gift-tax exclusion for education. Sue's grandparents pay $18,000 per year tuition directly to her educational institution. Reimbursing Sue won't work. Nor can you pay for such items as books, supplies, or room and board. OK, we are up to $38,000 without the IRS taking a gift-tax bite.

Next, the unlimited-medical-expense gift-tax exclusion: You can pay those expenses which are eligible as a medical expense deduction for tax purposes, including any and all health care providers and medical insurance. Say these expenses amount to $3,000 (the amount is truly unlimited) for Sue. Joe and Mary have succeeded in gifting Sue $41,000 in one year...free of any gift tax. Great!

Finally, the most powerful gifts of all are leveraged gifts. Here's a classic example: Joe and Mary (both age 60) can buy $1 million of second-to-die life insurance for an annual premium of $13,000 (to be paid over a period of 15 years, then the policy will not require any further premiums). So, Mary and Joe make a $13,000 gift to a irrevocable trust that owns the policy and is the beneficiary. The beneficiary of the trust is Sue's three-year-old little brother, Timmy. When Joe and Mary pass on, Timmy will have $1 million free of all taxes available for his care, welfare, support, and education.

Want to learn more about how gifts can enrich your family instead of the IRS? Send for "Leveraged Gifts to the Family. ▲

Irving Blackman is a senior tax partner in Blackman Kallick Bartelstein, a CPA firm specializing in closely held businesses. He has agreed to consult with readers of this column. His tax hotline is (312) 207-1040. The address to send for the special reports (at a nominal cost) is Book Division, 300 South Riverside Plaza, Chicago, IL 60606.

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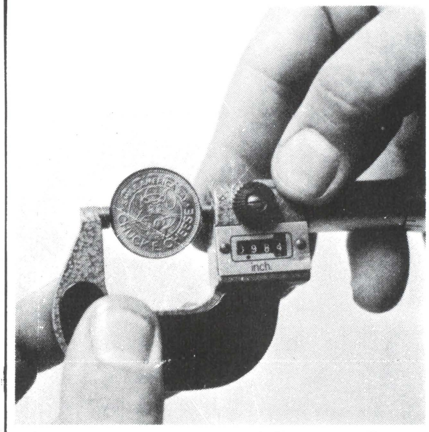

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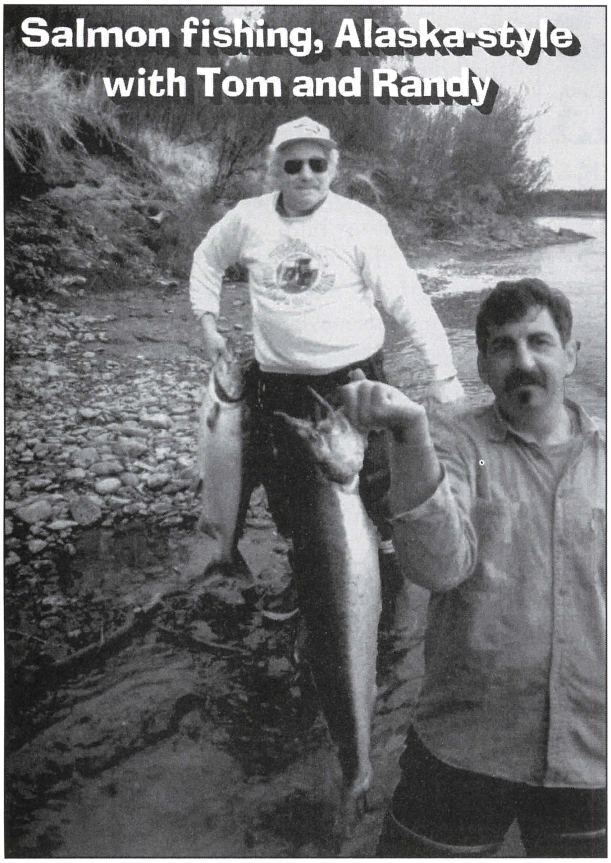
Using connectors, and game repair

A Play Meter Monthly Exclusive

RANDY FROMM



Salmon fishing, Alaska-style with Tom and Randy

I had a wonderful experience recently. I was invited to lead a service school at the Alaska Coin Machine Operators Association's annual trade show. I had never been to Alaska and, as it was around the time of the summer solstice, the fact that I would be able to experience the peculiar sensation of eternal daytime (it never got darker than twilight with the sun sinking below the horizon at around 11:00 pm and rising again just a couple of hours later) made the trip a memorable one.

As an added bonus, Tom Cahill (customer service manager of Williams Bally/Midway) would also be there. Tom and I go way back. If you've been in the coin-op business for any length of time, you've probably been to one of his excellent service schools and met him. He is, without a doubt, the most popular technical instructor in the industry. His seminars are always packed with fellow technicians, thirsty for knowledge, and he never fails to deliver. He also gives away lots of freebies like schematic diagrams, service manuals, T-shirts and specialized tools. Hey...no wonder he packs 'em in!

Tom and I both got in a little early and following a couple of days of salmon fishing on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, we headed into Anchorage for the show and schools. Tom was there not only to give a service school but to make a few repairs as well. Can you believe it? In their commitment to service, Williams actually sends their "Top Gun" all the way to Alaska to fix an older pinball machine that was having some problems that the owner couldn't resolve. How's that for service?

Naturally, I jump at the chance to fix just about anything. In this case, doubly so because for the first time Tom and I had an opportunity to work together on a game. I wanted to see The Man at work. We went to Pam Iverson's Space Station amusement center where the game had been dropped off for service.

Unfortunately, this was a simple repair; the connector for the general illumination (GI) was burned up. This is such a common problem in older pinball machines that I was very surprised the game's owner couldn't diagnose and repair it. After all, the connector, a Molex brand with .156-inch pin spacing, was totally fried. It was absolutely black! How could he not notice that?

In the field, this problem is commonly repaired with the brute-force method of soldering the GI wires directly to the PCB. While this type of repair works perfectly as far as fixing the problem is concerned, soldering the wires to the printed circuit board makes it difficult to remove the PCB further on down the road when other repairs are needed.

Connectors

What we needed was a connector. Not an exact replacement for the original (which had already proven itself to be inadequate to the task of carrying the large amount of current drawn by the GI lamps) but a connector that could carry a lot of current without getting hot and/or burning up.

We scrounged through the Space Station junk box of connectors that, wires and all, had been lopped off of old video games that had been converted. We found a suitable pair of complimentary connectors (that is to say, male and female connector housings also known as the plug and cap respectively) and commenced to modify the general illumination connections so this problem would never return.

The fix was easy. After removing the burned header from the PCB, we cleaned the burned part of the PCB with a fiberglass brush, tinned the solder pads (the areas of copper cladding that surround the holes in the PCB) and installed a new (used) header, cutting off the pins that would normally carry the GI current. We replaced the pin housing as well because the heat had made it brittle on the end where the GI pins used to be.

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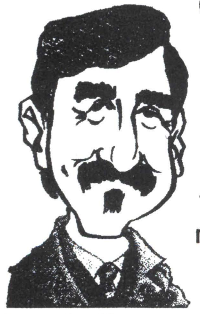

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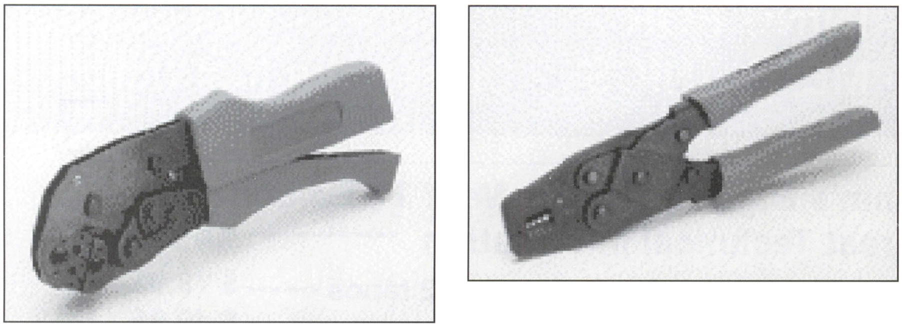
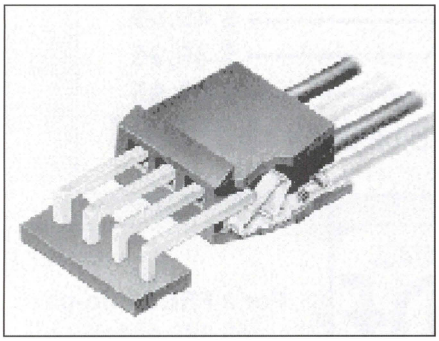


Inex pensive crimp tools are used to crimp pins on the ends of the wires.

The general illumination connections were made by adding an extra connector to carry the GI current. We had selected a connector that could handle the current easily. Since this was a salvaged connector, it already had the pins in it with wires attached. The Space Station technicians had done the right thing in leaving plenty of extra wire on the connector so we simply cut all the wires to a six-inch length, stripped the ends and soldered them to the board, passing each wire through the hole where the burned header pin used to live.



The molex connector

On the other end, we had to splice the wires from the connector to the existing GI wires, solder them and insulate the splice with heat-shrinkable tubing. Because the two connector parts were actually salvaged from different games, the connector pins had to be rearranged. We used a pin extractor tool to remove the pins and replace them in properly mating positions.

The new connectors can easily handle the high-current, general illumination load. Just to be certain, we over-engineered by splitting the current load between two pins where just one was used in the original design. With the new connectors installed, the game worked perfectly.

My point here is not to say what wonderful technicians Tom and I are for this magnificent accomplishment. This is routine stuff for game techs. My point is that connector replacement is common; a good repair shop or field-service technician will have all the tools and supplies needed to remove, replace and repair connector pins, headers and housings. It's much better to have new connector pins than to have to go on a connector safari every time you need to effect a repair. With that in mind, it's nice to have a ready reference to the connectors themselves and a source or two for replacement parts. Here they are:

The connectors

There are two manufacturers of the connectors that we use in games: one is Amp, the other Molex. The Amp connectors are also known as Mate-N-Lok Connectors.

To use new connectors, you must obtain a couple of specialized tools. One such tool is a crimp tool, which is used to crimp the connector pin on the end of the wire. Crimping is the metallurgical compression of a terminal around the conductor of a wire, which creates a common electrical path of low resistance and high current carrying capabilities. The technology of crimping was developed to provide a high quality connection between a terminal and a wire at a low cost. This technology was developed as a substitute to soldering and the problems associated with that technology. Crimp terminations can be applied with a basic hand tool.

Using the crimp tool is easy. All you have to do is strip the end of the wire about 1/8-inch, load the pin in the tool, and insert the end of the wire. You must make two crimps for each pin. The first crimps the pin to the stripped end of the wire (for the electrical contact) while the second crimp holds the pin securely to the wire by crimping to the insulation. This also acts as a strain relief, preventing the bare wire from breaking where it is crimped to the pin. You do not have to solder the wire to the pin. For Molex connectors the crimp tool is part number HT-1919. The crimp tool for Amp connectors is Amp part number 725.

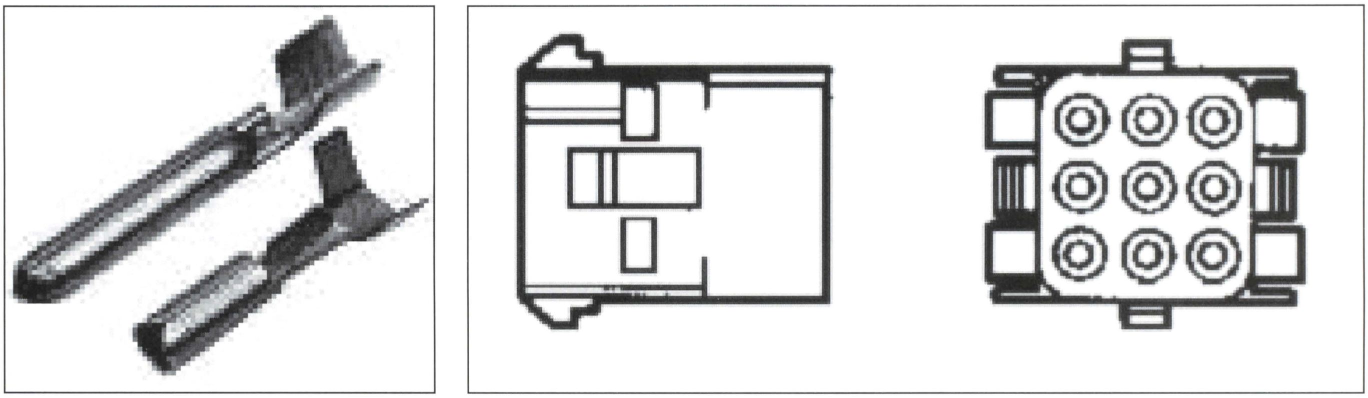
It is available from Caltronics, 21315-R Saticoy St., Canoga Park, CA 91304; (818)346-4936 and Scooter, 746 Vermont St., Palatine, IL 60067; (800)323-2727 or (847)359-6040. The price is around $44.25.

The second tool is a pin removal tool. This tool is important regardless of whether or not you use new connectors and pins. The pin removal tool (or pin-popper as it is sometimes called) does just what its name implies. It is used to remove a pin from the connector housing.

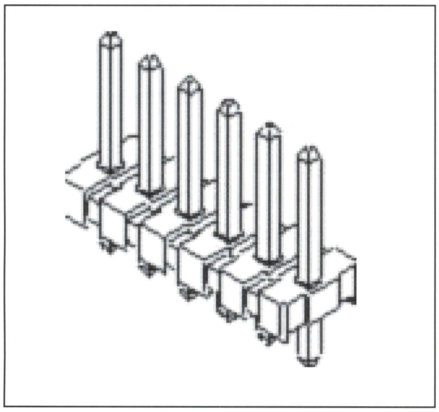
Because there are different sizes of connector pins, there are different sizes of pin removal tools as well. I have three different tools. Two are used for connector pins made by Molex; the other is for Amp connectors. One of the Molex pin extractor tools is for .093 pins. The Molex part number for this tool is HT-2038/11-03-0006. The other Molex pin extractor tool is for .062 pins. The Molex part number is HT-2285/11-03-0002.

There are a couple of tools available for the Amp connector pins. (There is only one size of Amp pin that we commonly use in games.) One is Amp part number 458994-1/2. This tool is unbelievably expensive at $56.65! Needless to say, I don't have one. The tool that I use to extract Amp pins is available from Caltronics. The part number is 40-100. The price is around $16.50.

This same part is available from Scooter and is part number is 746. Caltronics and Scooter are both good sources for the connector housings and contacts as well. When you contact them, ask them to send you a catalog. By the way, the male connectors are the



Repairs are a snap when you have new replacement pins (left) and connector housings.



The PCB connector pins are also known as "Headers".

pins and the female connectors are the sockets.

It is my personal preference to use Amp connectors instead of Molex. In the Amp connectors each pin is surrounded by a section of the plastic housing. The design of the connector housings make it less likely to bend a pin or socket while mating the two halves of the connectors.

Molex and AMP connectors are available from the following:

Imperial International
621 W. Route 46
Hasbrouck Heights, NJ 07604
(201)288-9199
(800)526-6261
fax (201)288-8990

Partstar
746 Vermont Street
Palatine, IL 60067
(800)603-6222
fax (847)359-9686

Ask them to send you a catalog and you'll have ready-reference to these and other connectors. You'll probably have to spend a couple of bills to get yourself set up with all of the connector housings, headers, pins, and tools but it will be worth it. When you have all the parts and tools, expert repairs are a snap.

That's all for this month. Remember, you can take advantage of a wealth of technical information at the AIM Web site. The URL is (http://198.70.210.46/aim/). See you at the Arcade School! ▲

Author's note and shameless, self-serving advertisement: This is your last chance to sign up for the final Arcade School of 1996. The five-day technical school will be held October 21-25 at the Days Inn-Lake Buena Vista Resort in Orlando, Fla. To enroll in the class, or for a free information package, call (800)484-9892. When the computer asks for your code, press INFO (4636).

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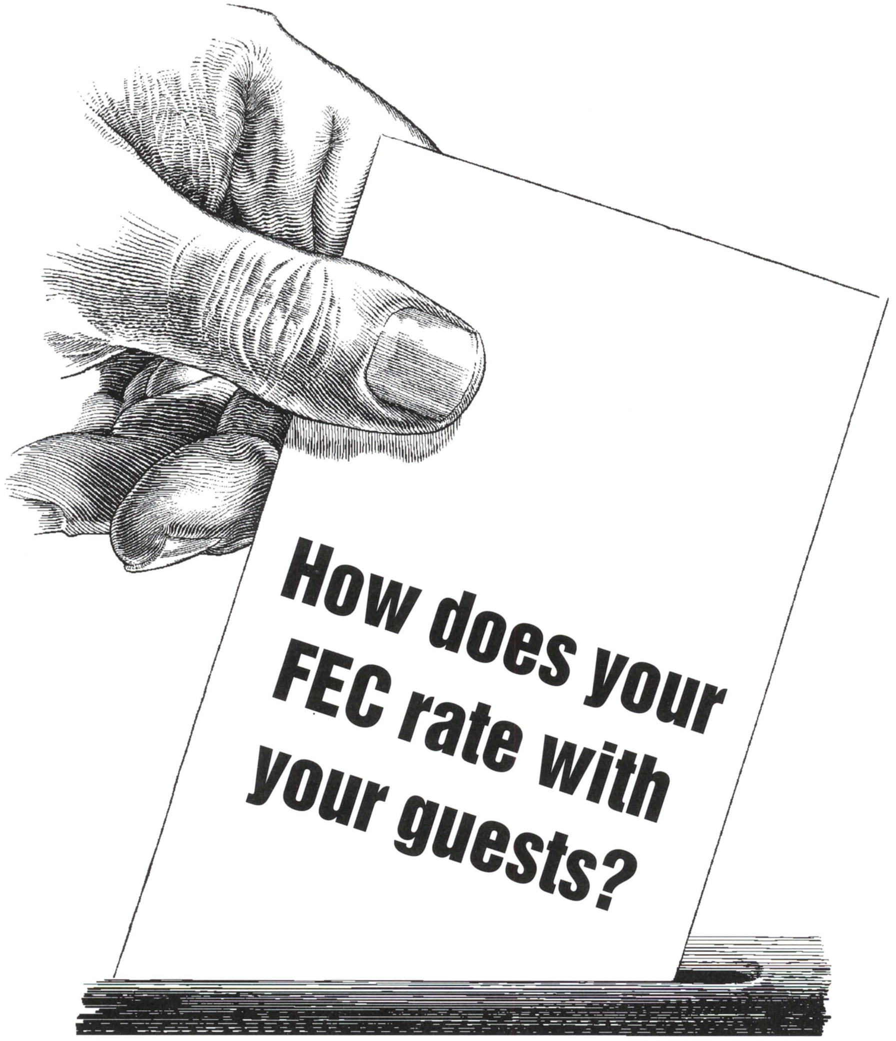

How does your FEC rate with your guests?

TICKET VIC FORTENBACH

The first thing we need to know is what is an exit poll? It's a survey done at the exit of a location to find out what your guests thought about your center.

An exit poll is an important way to find out what is good, bad, and ugly in your family fun center. It's a fact: one out of 100 complaints is all you'll hear. Chances are you will never hear what is GREAT at your family fun center!

Enter the exit poll! Exit polls are easy to conduct and the information gathered is vital in making your FEC better. In order to make your exit poll successful, there are some guidelines. First, the exit poll must be voluntary—no one should feel forced to answer your questions.

Do not give away prizes (game tokens included) for filling out the exit poll. If your customer chooses not to answer your questions, simply say thank you. Don't pester your customer. If the customer does choose to answer your questions, keep those questions short and to the point. No more than five questions should be asked at any one time.

You can have three sets of five questions each geared to your specific customer—a family, individual, etc. That way you get a better idea of what that specific group likes or dislikes about your center.

The staff member who asks the questions should be articulate and of medium height so they don't tower over or cause the guest to bend down in an uncomfortable manner. Your employee should be wearing some kind of identification, a printed shirt or a name badge, showing that they are an employee of the center.

A female, for some reason, is a better choice to ask questions, but don't rule out all your male employees. Your employee will need a clipboard on which to write answers; don't let your customers do it themselves. If you want to conduct a more lengthy survey, say one with 10 or more questions, you can have preprinted forms available at the snack bar to be deposited in a suggestion box.

Try to make the answers multiple choice. That way, your staff member will not take too long writing down the response, causing your exiting customers to wait. They will get irritated quickly if they're left standing while the answers are written down.

Since you have about five questions you need to make them count. Here are some suggestions:

1. **Where do you live (what zip code)?** You can use this information to determine how far the family or person drove to visit your center. You can also target your direct mail to a specific zip code. You can save on your advertising budget if you know that you do not attract patrons from certain cities.

2. **How many people are in your group or family?** Have numbers—one through 10—on a line to make it simple for the staff member to fill in. Have a blank space for more.

3. **How many children in your party?** This could be in addition to or instead of the previous question. You can use this specific information to define your target group. If you use this question, find out the children's ages. An example of your target group: average members in a family, four. Average number of children in a family, three, all under the age of 10.

If you discover that you have more younger children than you previously thought you did, you'll realize that not only will you need attractions for those kids but you'll also need to be sure the parents have a place to watch and wait for their children. A snack bar/rest area near the soft modular play equipment is the ideal situation.

4. **How long did you stay today?** Again, have multiple choice answers for your staff to circle. You can round the time off, for example, if the family stayed 45 minutes, circle one hour. The average stay can depend on the weather and/or how busy you are. No one likes to wait in lines. If there were special circumstances, like the weather or an especially busy day, you might want to make a note on that response sheet.

5. **How much did you spend today?** Again, make this a multiple choice for your staff member. Have responses like $5, $10, $20, $30, $40, or more. If the family spent $25 your staff member should circle the $5 and the $20 amounts.

> ***"The exit poll must be voluntary, no one should feel forced to answer your questions."***

6. **What do you like here?** This can be optional but it will tell you many things about your location. Never ask a negative question, such as what didn't you like here. Negative questions tend to reinforce a bad experience.

Some other questions you might include in your exit poll:

Is this your first visit?

How many times have you visited us before?

How did our staff treat you?

Did you have fun?

Is there anything we can do differently to make your visit more enjoyable?

Now all you need is a computer with a spread sheet program to gather all the information. The spread sheet program is easy to set up and program. In fact you may already be using one for your game collections. Once you have all the information you can better determine where your problems and your strengths are.

No FEC is perfect, so don't get upset if you get some negative responses. That's the point of this whole thing, to get real feedback. For example, if a family of four—mom and three kids all under 10 years old—stays two hours and spends less that $10 you have a serious problem. Your customers need to spend more time and more money at your park.

Once you see this happening and you have determined there's something amiss, now you begin to discover whether your prices are too high or what other causes may contribute to the problem.

With the spread sheet program you can get a better idea of what your center is to the people visiting. I hope this will get you started on making your FEC the best it can be. If you have any questions, I can be reached at Vicco Electronics, (619)322-4000 or e-mail at (TICKETVIC@AOL.COM). ▲

E-Zone
Send a message via
Play Meter's e-mail:
playmeter@aol.com

Analog-to-digital converters: part 2

This is the second part of a look at the components that convert analog signals from the real world into digital signals for use in logic circuits.

This article presents a brief overview of analog-to-digital converter technology. Last month I showed you a sample application that was used to introduce the parameters and limitations associated with ADCs. I also discussed the different terms to describe how ADCs work.

This month I'll compare several of the most common types of converters. There is a wide range of analog-to-digital converters on the market today. The design engineer must choose between these alternatives by balancing a number of important variables like resolution, conversion time, and the ADC's cost.

The four styles of converter types we will look at are presented in order of cost, beginning with the most expensive and the best overall performance. We will begin with the very fast flash converter, continue with the cascaded flash converter, then discuss the successive-approximation device, and finish with the integration-type device.

Flash Converter: The flash converter uses a number of voltage comparators to generate the digital output. A flash ADC is sometimes called a parallel-comparator converter. This device uses a resistor network to act as a multistage voltage divider. The output from this ladder network is then fed into the voltage reference inputs of a series of voltage comparators. The remaining inputs on all of the comparators are then tied directly to the analog input voltage. The outputs from the comparators are then fed into a block of logic that takes note of the highest weighted comparator. The logic is used to set the outputs to form the appropriate digital code.

As I had stated before, the parallel comparator is one of the most expensive types generally used. The reason for this high cost is the number of comparators needed. To construct an N-bit converter, 2n-1 comparators are required. Therefore, a four-bit A/D converter needs only 15 comparators, while an eight-bit device would need a total of 255 comparators. About 16 times more comparators are necessary just to double the resolution.

Cascaded Flash ADC: To reduce the high cost of the flash ADC, the cascaded flash parallel comparator was developed. This device combines the digital outputs from two or more separate flash ADC, to create a single series of output lines with a digital code representation of the input analog voltage. The key to this device is its use of a digital to analog converter.

The digital to analog converter is the exact opposite of an N-bit A/D converter. A DAC converts a series of N binary input lines into the equivalent analog voltage. Through the use of weighted current sources and a current to voltage converter, each current source produces twice the current of the previous one. Also, the current for each source is turned on or off under the control of a digital input line. The total current is then the sum of all the current sources that are turned on. An op-amp. and resistor combination are then used as a current to voltage converter, generating the analog output voltage.

Successive-Approximation Converters: A further reduction in the number of comparators required for conversion is achieved in a successive-approximation analog to digital converter. This device only requires one voltage comparator to perform the conversion, regardless of the number of bits of resolution required at the output lines. With this reduction in comparators, a corresponding price decrease can be achieved.

This device makes a series of educated guesses at the digital value of the input voltage. Just like a child playing a game of "high/low" the converter makes guesses at the value based upon the too high or too low feedback from the previous guesses. The analog voltage to be converted is fed directly to the inverting terminal of the unit's voltage comparator. The non-inverting terminal of this comparator gets its signal from the output of a digital to analog converter, which gets its digital signal directly from the device's output register.

Integration (counter-comparator) ADC: The last type of converter we will look at is called an integration ADC. The analog input voltage is sent to a voltage to current converter. This V/C converter then generates a current, "Ia", that is directly proportional to "Va". The output current is then used to charge a fixed value capacitor, whose voltage will increase a fixed number of volts for every fixed length of time that "Ia" is applied.

The capacitor's ever increasing voltage, "Vc", is then applied to the input of a single operational amplifier, which then compares this voltage to a reference voltage, "Vx", created by the R1/R2 voltage divider. The output of the comparator is then added with a standard clock signal, which is then used to decrement a binary counter. The longer it takes for the capacitor's voltage to reach the reference voltage, "Vx", the lower the binary counter is able to decrement. ▲

LARRY MUNDAY

Non-stop excitement at APA CHAMPIONSHIP

The excitement never stopped as the 1996 Bud Light National Team Championship was played out on 72 Dynamo tables at the Riviera Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas Aug. 5-10.

Opening ceremonies on Aug. 5 featured American Poolplayers Association founder Terry Bell, as well as professional players Nick Varner, Steve Mizerak, Kim Davenport, and Johnny Archer, all of whom ignited the 450 Open Division teams.

Taking top honors and $25,000 in prize money in the Open Division were Angie's 8 of Independence, La. The team clinched the title by defeating Table Aces of Ottawa, Ill. After three hours of intense play during the finals match of the Ladies Division, the team Sandy's Place of Jackson, Miss., took first place and $10,000 in prize money. They won 3-0 over the Dejavu team of Battle Creek, Mich.

In the Dynamo 9-Ball National Team Championship, the Captain Rat team from Cape Girardeau, Mo., took home first place and $15,000 in cash after defeating the Irish Rover II team of Philadelphia, Pa.

All three national team championships were hosted by the APA, which awarded a total of $600,000 in prize money, the largest amount ever paid out at an amateur event. The event also gave players a chance to compete alongside their favorite professionals.

Professionals Archer, Michael Coltrain, J.R. Calvert, and Tony Ellin teamed up with the APA and donated their time to play against fans in an effort to raise money for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Bell also joined in the effort by doing trick shots for the crowd. The APA also conducted an eight-on-the-break contest for the cause, raising over $4,000.

In another crowd pleasing move, Archer, Calvert, Coltrain, Varner, Jimmy Welch, Reed Pierce, and Howard Vickery conducted a mass autographing spree of shirts and hats for their fans.

This year's Camel Mini Tournament marked the debut of new pool table lights featuring Joe Camel and the Hard Pack both with APA and PBT logos. Winners in the event included: Sherri Belanger of Houma, La., in the 2-3 skill level; Chet Sutton of Salado, Texas, in skill level 4; Dennis Clemens of Fredonia, N.Y. in skill level 5; Andy Dozard of Mapleton, Ill., in skill level 6; Kevin Bell of Dover, Del., in skill level 7; and the team of Alan Walker of Crown Point, Ind., and Andy Tsouchlos of Calumet City, Ill., in the Scotch Doubles.

For more information about the APA and its sanctioned events, call (800)372-2536. Here's a look at the full results:

Open Division winner Angie's 8.

The team Sandy's Place took top honors in the Ladies Division.

Dynamo 9-Ball winning team Captain Rat.

8-Ball Open Division: 1st–Angie's 8 (Shane Phillips, Mark Tallo, Glen Dubois, Roy Hunt, Pete Miller, Rhonda Tallo, Shane Toups, and Alton Delauneville); 2nd–Table Ace's (Dirk Pagakis, Jeff Grundon, Jeff Aicher, Michael Affrunti, Mark Sila, Wilferd Huddleston, Pat Bayer, and Jeff Burke); 3rd–Johnny Bob's (Darren Seaton, Bill Hogan, Dan Ferrari, Dave Bourland, Brian Drnjevic, Steve Mitchell, Jim Wright, and Bernie Hallowell); 3rd–Main Street Cafe (Mark Wiseman, Dusty Kilbarger, Jeff Kilbarger, Lori Wiseman, Steve Green, David Strain, Aaron Bryant, and Jeff Hay).

8-Ball Ladies Division: 1st–Sandy's Place (Leigh Bacon, Shana Rusling, Janice Steele, Darlene Edwards, Sandy Whatley, Sonya Rose, Jeannie Husbands, and Stacy Hammons); 2nd–Dejavu (Terri Bucklin, Carrie Mock, Helen Dean, Beverly Baker-Carranza, Ann Collins, Sally Jenkins, Angie Cummings, and Maryann Nagy); 3rd–After 8 (Nancy Middleton, Cheryl Martin, Kim Campbell, Chris Krause, Teresa Palmer, Donna Jones, Renee Tucker, and Teresa Damon); 3rd–Cave Women (Lisa Smith, Sherry Nesbitt, Joyce Miller, Tina Wyatt, Carol Brewer, Amy Rogers, Nadine Smith, and Robin Fleming).

Dynamo 9-Ball: 1st–Captain Rat (Ron Bryant, George Bryant, George Wulfers, Jerris Rafety, Jerry Hill, Jeff Beister, Chris Conklin, Amy Brooks, and Joe Brooks); 2nd–Irish Rover II (Frank Sicilia, Rich Puchino, Jennifer Deblasio, Dominick Tullio, Mike Santilla, Erica Cohen, Lew Woolverton, and Yvonne Wiley); 3rd–Firm (David Spharler, Kenneth Martin, Shannon Stokes, Vicki Von Boeckman, Ron Regenilli, Gary Allen, Rudy Boldreghini, and Krishna Ravinuthala); 3rd–Le Pub (Shane Daker, Jayson Becker, Roland Hobson, Jerry Piro, Keith Goeken, John Shannon, Rick Rusch, and Randy Mullins). ▲

VALLEY GOLD

draws darters to Las Vegas

Valley Recreation Products' 10th annual North American Championships were the culmination of another great season with hundreds of qualified darters going to the throwline at the Sahara Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

Each qualifier for the event, known as the Valley Gold, received free travel and lodging with the winning team of two men and two women going on to international play in the Netherlands, a total package worth close to $20,000.

When the last dart was thrown, standing tall in the winners' circle were: John Mielcarek of Milwaukee, Wis.; John Kuffer of Janesville, Wis.; Meradith McGee of Orlando, Fla.; and Helen King of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. This foursome was scheduled to compete overseas in September.

Each of the four winners received a green marble plaque with beveled edges, as well as a brass easel for display. Each of the 12 finalists, who did not make the final team, got a walnut and glass plaque.

The event got underway with 300 finalists from regional qualifying tournaments across the country registering for the competition. Highlighting the first evening was a minitournament with both men's and women's events. The featured play was 301 Wipe-Out, and the affair lasted until midnight as excitement built with every throw. The event was the first of four minitournaments held during the championships.

For the main event, players competed amidst festive Valley Gold banners, as well as flags from all 50 states and Canada. Men played 501 Double-In/Double-Out, 501 Double-Out, and Cricket. Women's matches included 301 Double-In/Double-Out, and Cricket.

Final festivities took place at the Awards Banquet with more than 300 people in attendance for the buffet-style dinner. Emceed by Valley's vice president of promotions Dave Courington, players received their awards as well as thousands of dollars in cash awards.

Valley sent its appreciation to members of its own staff, as well as Laramie Screen Printing and Darts & More of Las Vegas. According to the company, the fact that close to 100 operators were represented by entrants at the event is ample evidence that the tournament/league concept continues to be important in expanding player participation and increasing revenues. ▲

Team North America, (l-r): Helen King, Meradith McGee, John Mielcarek, and John Kuffer.

Men finalists, (l-r): Colin Sim, Ed Sekaquaptewa, Russell Burgoyne, Tim Tegel, Tom May, John Mielcarek, and John Kiffer. Not pictured: John Uraine.

Women finalists, (l-r): Meradith McGee, Alice Brooks, Kristi Schanke, Ellen Rice, Pam Dischler, Sharon Sonntag, Carolyn Nessman, and Helen King.

WHAT'S NEW

ID4, THE PINBALL

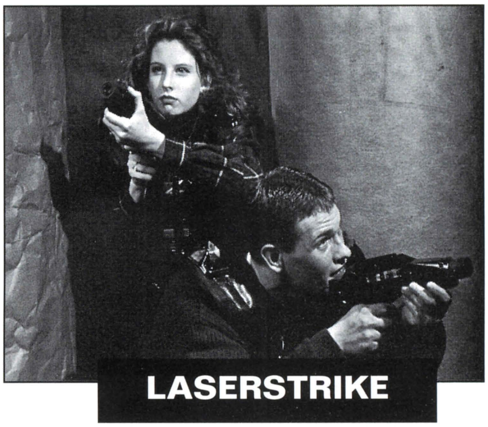
Sega Pinball introduces a new pinball from another amusement planet, *ID4, The Pinball,* based on the blockbuster movie "Independence Day," now commonly known as "ID4," which asks the question, "what would happen if upset aliens showed up on Earth?"

Game play starts off with a bang as players try to blast an alien out of the sky. By hitting the launch button at the right time, they are rewarded with 20 million points. But players that miss, better start looking for cover.

With impressive geometry and shot selection, the playfield is loaded with features like three orbit shots, three ramps, two under the playfield ball locks, a mechanized alien head that opens and closes, an illuminated alien fighter, and three flippers.

Multiball is started using the mechanized alien head with the first shot opening it up and the second locking the ball. Once in multiball, players have four ways to score seven different jackpots. Players are guided toward each shot by custom speech prompts from film stars Jeff Goldblum, Will Smith, Randy Quaid, and Harry Connick Jr.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Sega Pinball, 1990 Janice Ave., Melrose Park, IL 60160; (708)345-7700; fax (708)345-7718.



LASERSTRIKE

Ultrazone and Laser Game Associates of Dallas have joined forces to present LaserStrike, an exciting new concept in laser tag developed specifically for bowling centers.

LaserStrike combines the latest technology in laser game systems with the convenience and cost-effectiveness of a portable playing area designed to sit on top of dormant bowling lanes.

The 2,400-square-foot playing facility offers all the advantages of a conventional laser game arena for a fraction of the cost of building a permanent arena. It can be installed on just eight lanes in less than a week. When the lanes are needed for leagues, the system can be easily disassembled for storage or installation at another location.

LaserStrike comes complete with built-in light, sound, and video systems; a complete point-of-sale package; and management support.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Ultrazone, 2880 E. Flamingo Road, Suite E, Las Vegas, NV 89121: (800)628-2829; fax (702)734-3617.

SILVER FALLS

McGregor Enterprises announces the release of its new redemption product *Silver Falls*, a coin pusher which is now in its second production run and currently available. The games will be distributed by Best Amusements of South Carolina.

Computer generated 3-D graphics and a realistic waterfall backdrop serve to attract attention from potential new players while a large tempered glass front panel over the entire playfield allows high visibility and provides safety and security from breakage.

Precision mathematical calculations to three decimal points of the shelf and coin size allows an enticing number of coins to lay far over the edge only to be released by the skilled placement of another coin onto the playfield. The loud crashing of coins into the metal win cup is designed to keep players excited while attracting the attention of others.

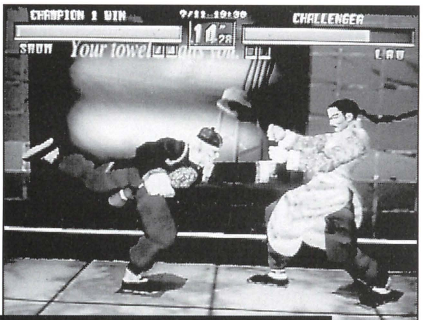
The coinslide only allows entry of the proper sized coin into the play area, channeling false coins into a separate coin box. The slide is coupled with an opto-sensor and meter to allow for accounting of coins paid to the playfield. The operator may also tabulate a payout percentage by calculating the numbers of coins paid in, the house, and the players.

Side coin drops ensure operator profit by removing coins pushed at an angle rather than straight; payout percentage may be adjusted with only a quick twist of a screw to re-size the house coin-drop.

All machines are guaranteed for one year from the date of delivery to the operator. Dimensions are 60" high x 23-1/2" wide x 32" deep.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact McGregor Enterprises, 580 Roads End, Pittsboro, NC 27312; (919)933-8066; fax (919)933-2726.

WHAT'S NEW



VIRTUA FIGHTER 3

Sega GameWorks announces the completion of *Virtua Fighter 3* with the new Model 3 CG board, which features cutting-edge graphics and is three times faster than Sega's previous Model 2 board.

The technology delivers graphics that until now have only been available on high-speed computer graphics workstations. This now makes stunning game detail possible.

Virtua Fighter 3 draws the player into a high-tech world of martial arts fighting action. Graphics sizzle at one million polygons per second. The animations are very fluid, and Sega has paid meticulous attention to precisely replicate movements of the human body and create detailed scenery for the playfield.

The Model 3 board, co-developed by Lockheed Martin, will be used to increase interactivity for the *Virtua Fighter* series and other state-of-the-art titles due for release.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Sega GameWorks, 255 Shoreline Dr., Suite 400, Redwood City, CA 94065; (415)802-3265; fax (415)802-3729.

KEY CATCHER

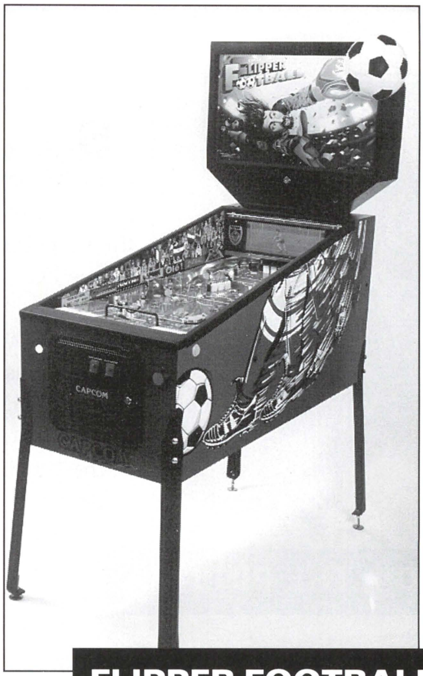
American Sammy announces the release of *Key Catcher*, a merchandiser, vending machine, and amusement game all rolled into one.

The machine features a revolutionary robotic arm, which the player controls by pressing buttons to move the arm vertically and horizontally. Once the arm locks onto the chosen prize, it extends and then grabs the prize right from the rack.

Colorful and eye-catching, *Key Catcher's* looks are enhanced by its beautiful store window effect that is sure to guarantee attention. It can be placed in any type of location and themed to seasons and holidays, featuring all types of merchandise that can hang from a key chain.

Also available from American Sammy is a line of prizes for *Key Catcher*, and a starter kit can be purchased with the game to get started right away.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact American Sammy, 901 Cambridge Drive, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007; (847)364-9787; fax (847)364-9831.



FLIPPER FOOTBALL

Capcom Coin-Op introduces its new pinball game, *Flipper Football,* an amusement experience designed with simple play features and ease of operation in mind.

Flipper Football takes the apocalyptic and intoxicating fanatism of an entire stadium of soccer fans and the drama of two teams facing off in the most popular sport in the world and delivers it in a 20" x 46" electromechanical replica.

Capcom says the game is the first in a new genre of games based on its trademark Interplay Display. *Flipper Football* achieves sychronized interaction between ball play and the display: a 3-D ball is shot at the goal under the display and its progress is continued on the display in 2-D animation toward a tough-to-beat goal keeper.

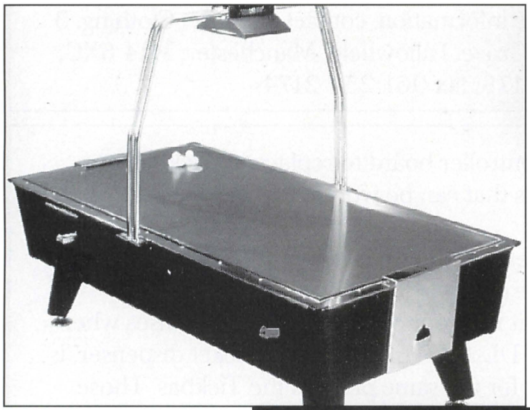
The game also offers penalty kicks, burn-the-goalie-shots, yellow and red cards, free kicks, and the presence of a referee. Like a real soccer game, *Flipper Football* is a timed-play game with an operator-adjustable time-per-coin feature. The first setting pits player against player or the machine while a second setting provides team play and doesn't mark ball drains as goals scored against the shooter but simply transfers ball possession to the other team.

The possible number of players is operator-adjustable as is the option of having custom team names entered on the display. *Flipper Football* has a highest goal getter table that contains the compound scores of individual players over a set period of time, perfect for interlinking units for possible league and tournament play.

Other features include a sound system with multiMPEG sound processing, automatic troubleshooting, short circuit protected lamps and solenoids, individually controlled lamps, lamp warming for prolonged life, high resolution dot-matrix display, one coil type on most features, burned-out lamp and broken or open wire detection, all-new playfield access with multilevel lift bracketing, adjustable flipper power, visual feedback diagnostics, and no ground wire on the back of the playfield.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Capcom Coin-Op, 3311 N. Kennicott Ave., Arlington Heights, IL 60004; (847)797-6215; fax (847)797-6218.

WHAT'S NEW



DYNAMO POOL TABLE, TABLE HOCKEY

Dynamo presents two new products: a pool table sporting a fresh look and state-of-the-art operational features and the *Top Brass* table hockey.

The company has redesigned the pool table to include more than a dozen new features including a wider ball view door and lighting, a quiet package where balls travel on long-lasting synthetic rubber lined ramps, reinforced legs, magnetic ball separator, replaceable rail assembly, and secured leg tee nuts.

To round out the new table, Dynamo has also unveiled a new styling package called Summit Ash with a blonde wood finish and green felt. The table is also available with the popular *Top Brass*-style package.

The new table hockey game sports the same look as the *Top Brass* pool table, including brass trim, black laminate, solid wood rails, and vivid blue playfield. It was designed to complement the company's pool line.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Dynamo, 2525 Handley-Ederville Road, Richland Hills, TX 76118; (817)284-0114 or (800)527-6054; fax (817)284-7606.

SCARED STIFF

Midway Mfg. unveils *Scared Stiff,* a pinball frightfest in which Elvira, Mistress of the Dark, leads players through a variety of terror-filled tales.

The playfield animates the tales with props right out of a horror movie, including a haunted crate that mysteriously gobbles the ball, lifelike frogs that actually leap against the glass, a ramp made of beastly bones, and a corpse-filled coffin.

Game design includes an industry-first interactive 3-D backglass design that includes Elvira's captivating beauty and a spinning mutant spider. Players can stop the spider for enhanced playfield scoring and secret awards. Sound effects feature the sensuous and seductive voice of Elvira.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Midway Mfg., 3401 N. California Ave., Chicago, IL 60618; (312)961-1000; fax (312)961-1060.

Surf's up!

Catch Play Meter on the Internet.

Web site 1:

http://198.70.210.46/aim/pmhome.html

Web site 2:

http://www.funone.com/pubs/playmetr.htm

E-mail:

playmeter@aol.com

WHAT'S NEW

CAPRisk

An advanced method for accurately determining crime vulnerability anywhere in the country, including entertainment facilities and complexes, has been developed and validated by CAP Index Inc. Known as CAPRisk, the system can identify the risk of personal and property crimes at any location in the United States. The model correlates demographic data, survey data, and other data bases with known crime indicators to produce highly accurate and valid crime projections.

The new system was evaluated through comparisons with actual crime experiences suffered by companies in the United States. CAPRisk is designed for market analysts and planners, site location specialists, and operations and security managers.

For more information, contact CAP Index Inc., 20830 Valley Forge Circle, King of Prussia, PA 19406; (610)354-9100; fax (610)828-2885.

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BUDGET RANGE COSTUME CHARACTERS

Character costume maker Situation Clothing has come up with a new appealing idea with its new budget range off-the-shelf family of characters concept.

This allows theme park, FEC, or arcade operators the opportunity to stock up on three characters for the cost of two. The characters are bagged up and ready to promote.

There is the Dixie Bear family, including mother, father, and baby. Situation Clothing also comes in Cat, Mouse, Squirrel, and many other styles to suit different themes.

For more information, contact Situation Clothing, 3 Wynnstay Grove, Fallowfield, Manchester, M14 6XG; 061 257 2178; fax 061 257 2174.

MAXITICK, TICKBAS UPDATE

Real Killer Systems (RKS Inc.) announces the release of a new ticket controller board to replace its Tickbas controller. Many state laws now define the maximum value or number of tickets that can be won so this has been incorporated into the controller board.

The new Maxitick is configurable to dispense a maximum number of tickets with the option to return the remaining credits and force a play.

The controller returns credits to the game if it runs out of tickets and auto-senses when tickets are reloaded, is pre-harnessed for the DL-1275 or compatible ticket dispenser, is an extension of the original hardware and software of the Tickbas, and sells for the same price as the Tickbas. Those currently using the Tickbas can upgrade it by using a retro kit now available from RKS.

For more information, contact RKS Inc. 106 Kenwood Road, Fayateville, GA 30214-3446; (770)460-0872; fax (770)460-0872.

LUCKY STRIPE CLEANING CARD

DOLLAR BILLS
INSERT BILL FACE UP
VEND

Clean Team Co. introduces Lucky Stripe, its new and improved dollar bill reader cleaning card designed to clean all types of currency validators and readers currently available.

Utilizing the latest technology, Clean Team Co. has developed a cleaning card that will actually be read and accepted by all validators regardless of the manufacturer. The soft, non-abrasive cleaning material traps the contaminants in its fibrous core and transports them out of the validator.

The cards are presaturated for convenience with LenSafe solution which will not fog up any lenses. To utilize the card, operators simply remove it from its pouch, insert into the reader, and then discard.

For more information, contact Clean Team Co., 1445 Los Angeles Ave., Suite 201, Simi Valley, CA 93065; (805)581-1000; fax (805)581-1058.

PINBALL FLYERS GUIDE

The new age of multimedia has arrived in the pinball arena for those interested in the history of pin games or collectors of pinball flyers. The Pinball Flyers Guide is the first catalogue for pinball flyers on CD-ROM put out by Ulf Wolfgruber.

All flyers are stored in their original layout, both front and back pages as well as any additions. A preview helps users browse through all the scanned pages and gives an instant view of the cover page.

More than 500 flyers are currently available starting from early years of pinball up through 1996. PFG contains mostly English language flyer copies, but offers a number of European flyer layouts as well. Special selections can be queried according to model, manufacturer, or name.

For more information, contact Ulf Wolfsgruber, Hans-Bockler-Str. 99a., D-56567 Neuwied, Germany; e-mail (UWOLF@COMPU-SHACK.COM) or (ULF.WOLFSGRUBER@T-ONLINE.DE).

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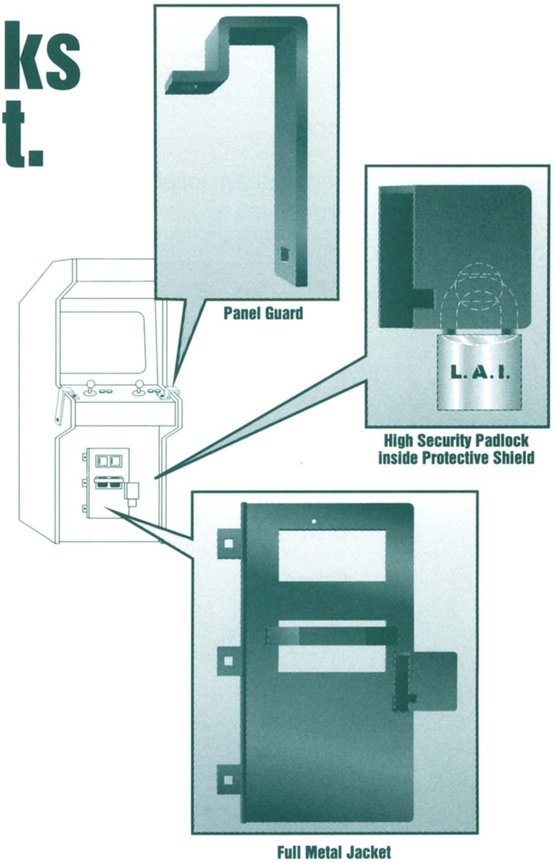
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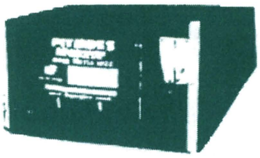

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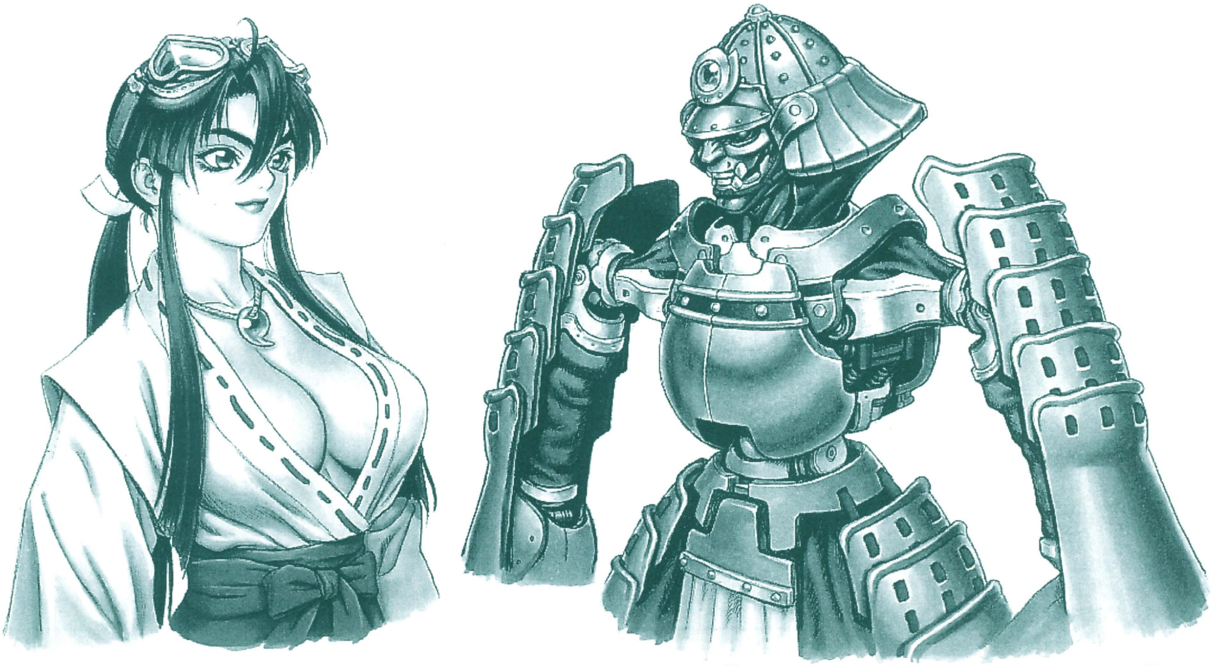

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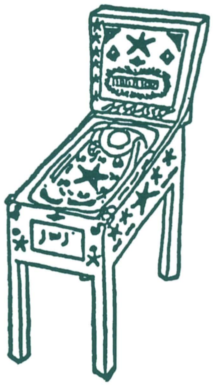

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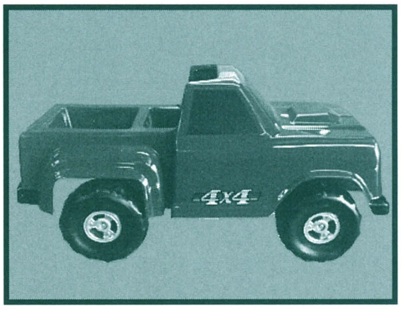

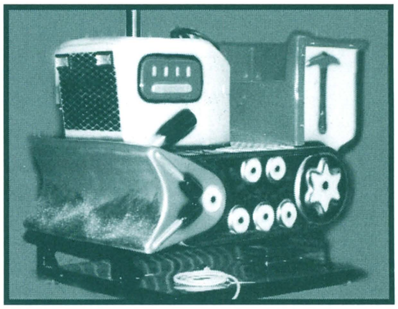

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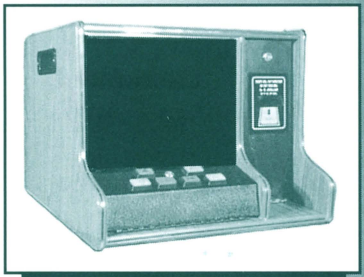

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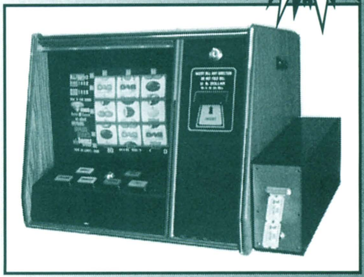

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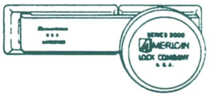

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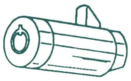

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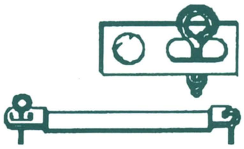

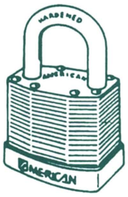

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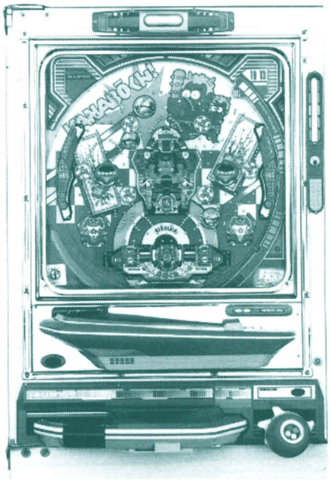

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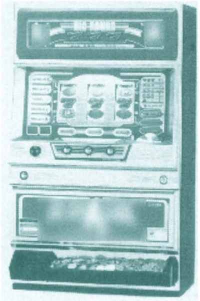

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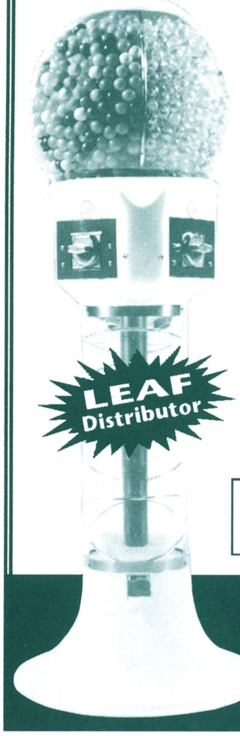

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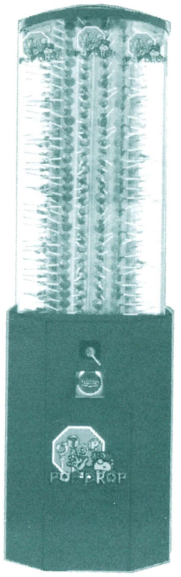

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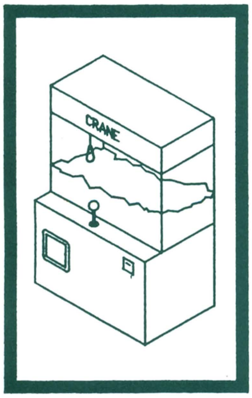

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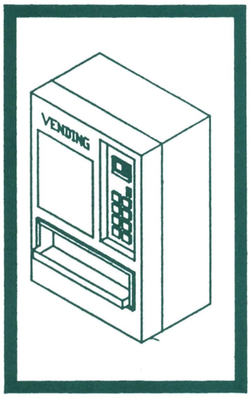

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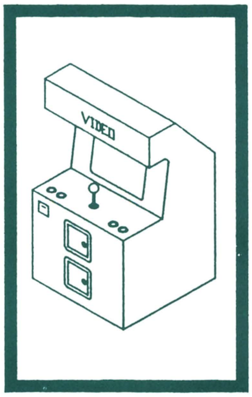

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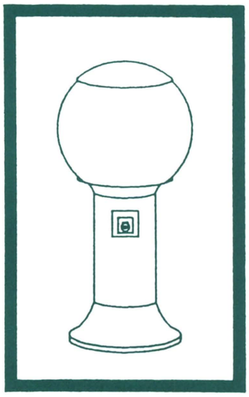

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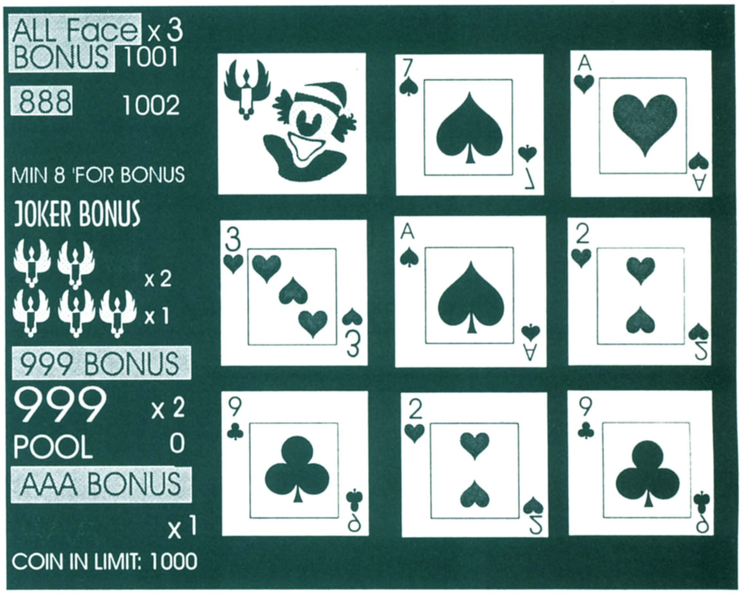
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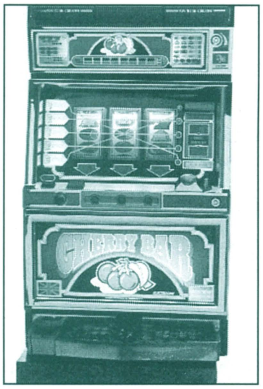

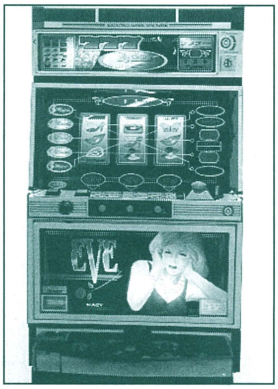

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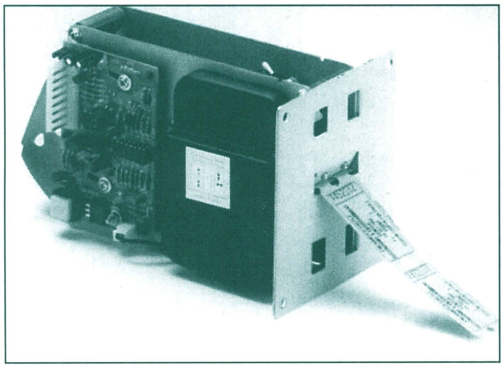

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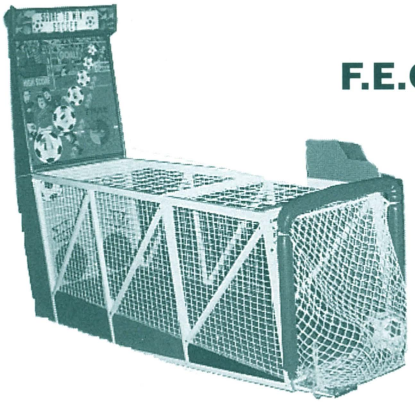

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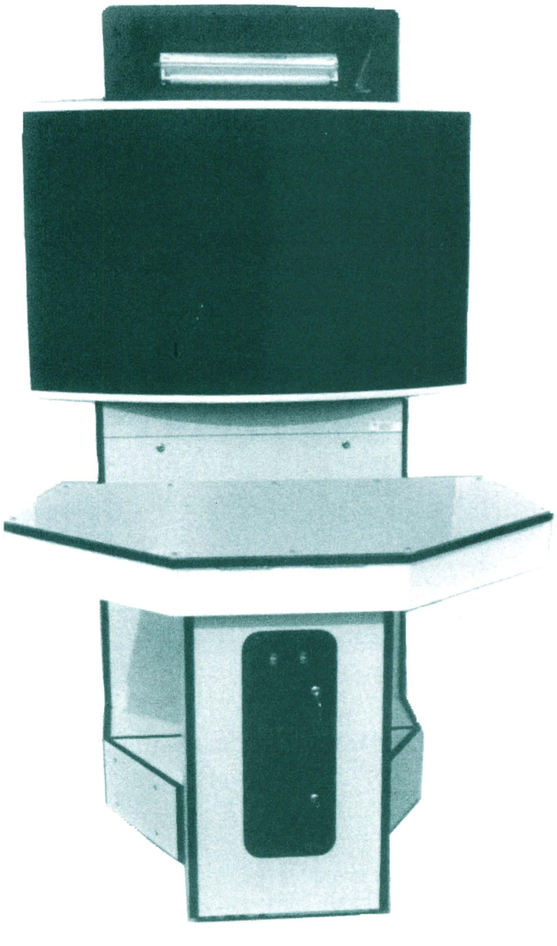

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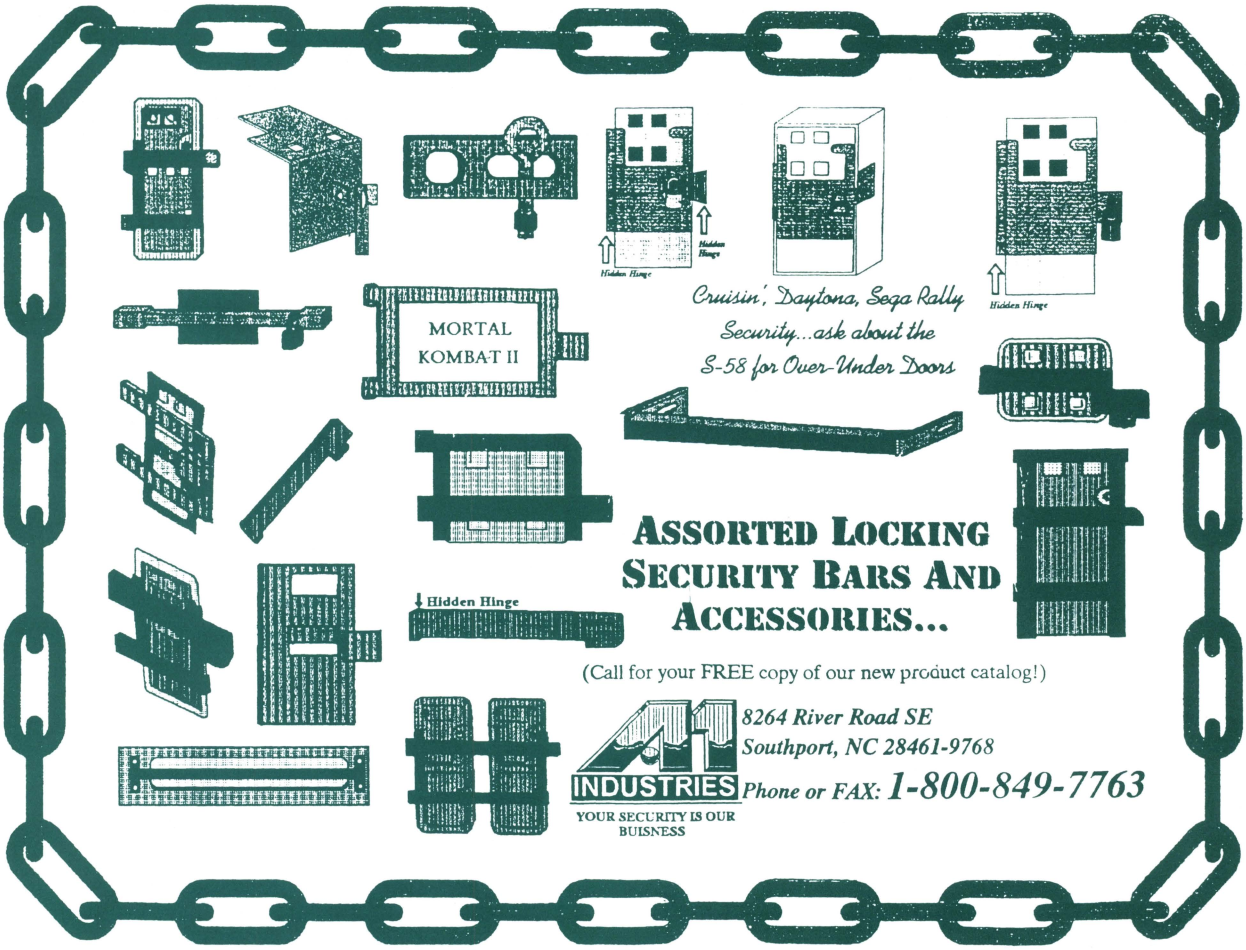

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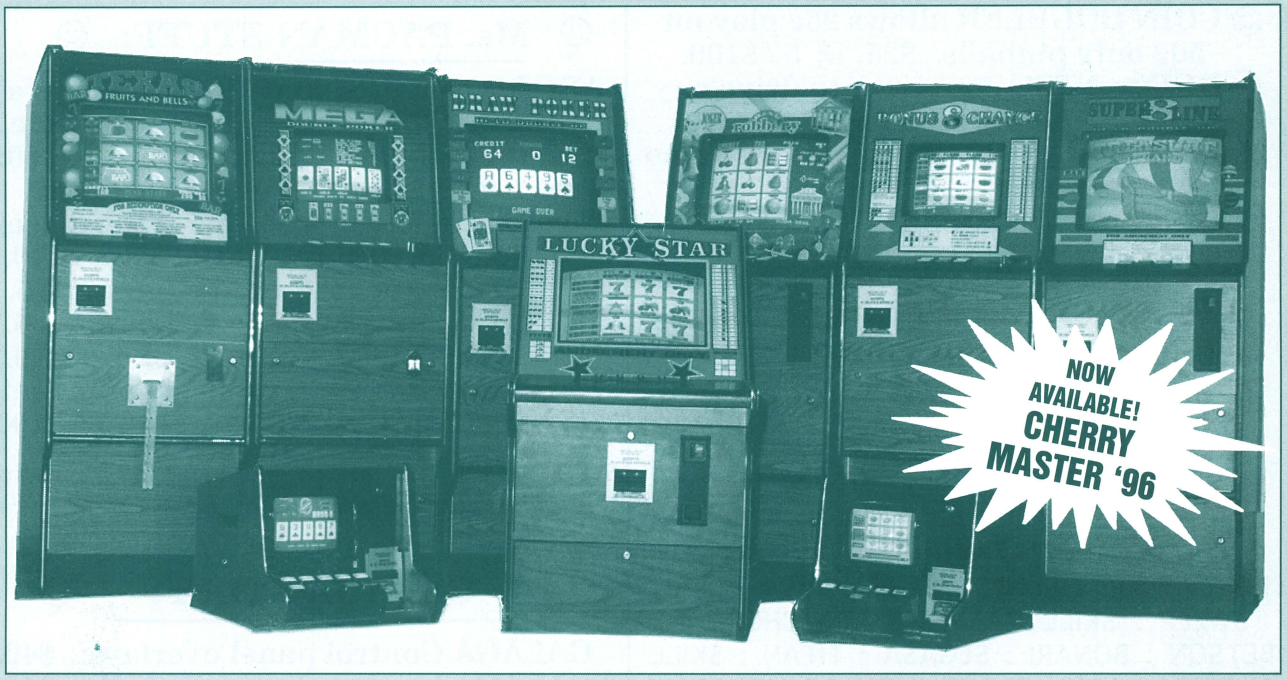

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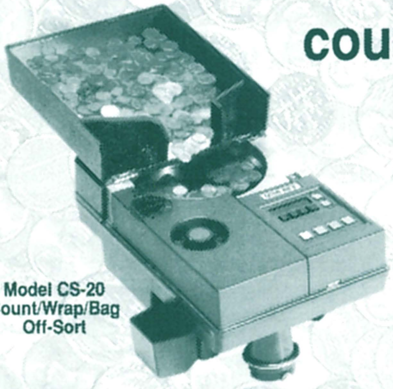

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5
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NEW LOCATION

10 thru 12
FUN Expo '96
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19
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26
Tampa, FL
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November

9
Columbus, OH
Buckeye Building
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17th Avenue & I-71 Exit 111
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Collector's Auctions

16
Chicago, IL
Ramada Inn - O'Hare
6600 N. Manhiem Road, Rosemont, IL
6th Annual Pinhead Collector's Auction
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Attendance info. Contact: Rob Berk at 1-800-323-3547
A 10% Buyers Premium will be applied.

23
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30
Des Moines, IA
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Iowa State Fairgrounds

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December

7
Cedar Rapids, IA
Hawkeye Downs

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14
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- Phone numbers listed for auctions are for Friday and Saturday only.
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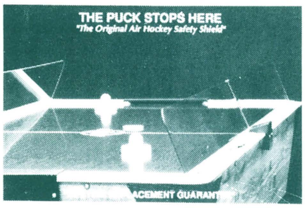

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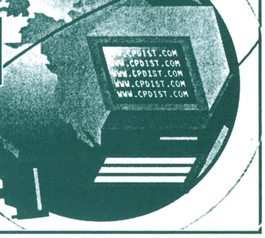

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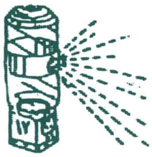

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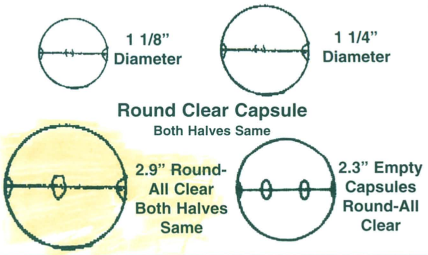
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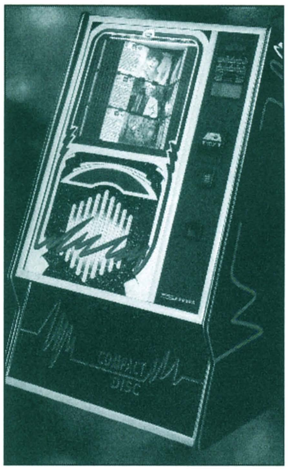

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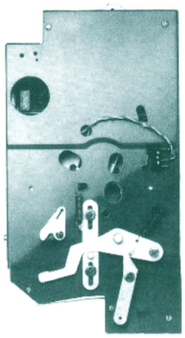

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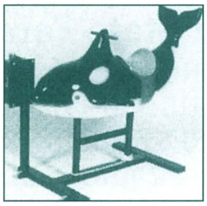

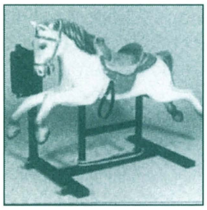

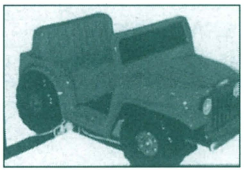

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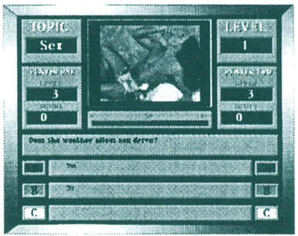

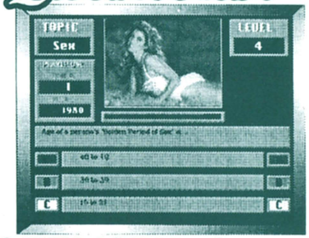

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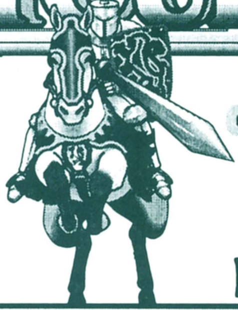

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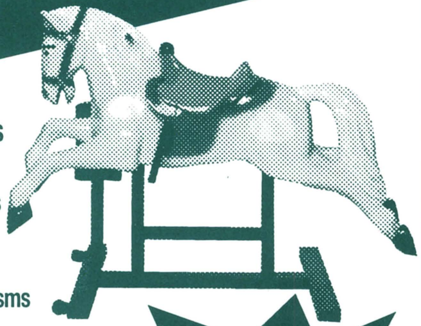

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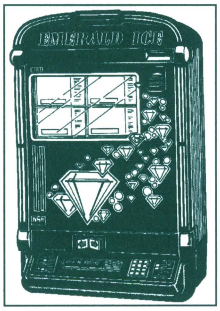

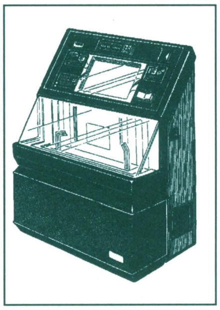

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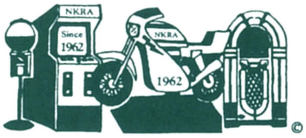

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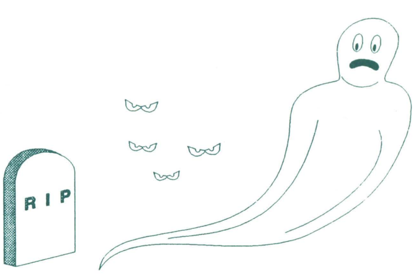

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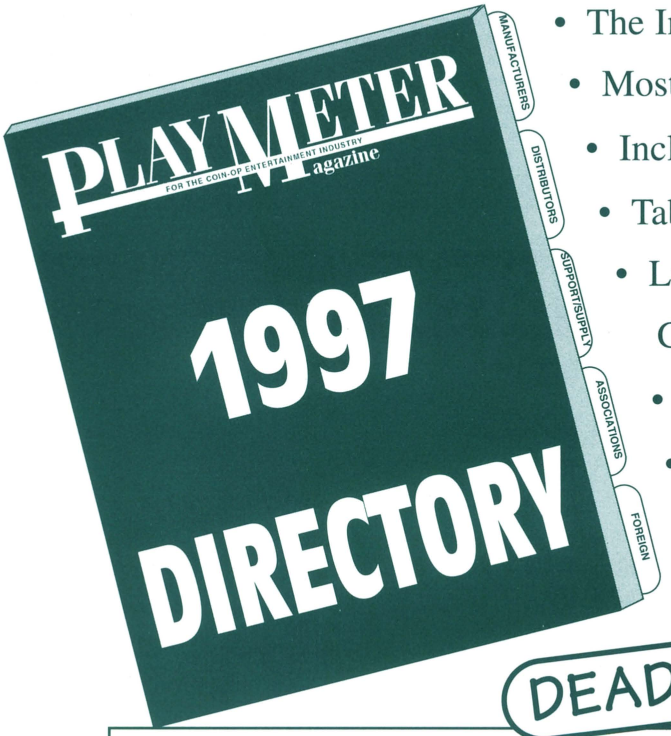
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Per column inch (minimum one inch at $30)		20

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PLAY METER'S classified advertising is NOT agency commissionable.

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Reservations and raw copy deadline for ALL classified ads is the 15th of the month prior to issue date (e.g., March 15 for April issue).

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OCTOBER	**5** SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA UAW Hall # 506 2266 San Diego Ave. Old Town, San Diego	**12** ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI 1335 So. Fifth Street St. Charles, MO Exhibition Hall	**19** FULLERTON, CALIFORNIA 2116 E. Walnut Ave. Fullerton, CA	**26** SACRANENTO, CALIFORNIA Placer County Fgrds. 800 All American Blvd. Roseville, Jones Hall
NOVEMBER	**16** DALLAS / MESQUITE, TEXAS 800 Big Town Mall Mesquite, TX Expo Hall	**23** FULLERTON, CALIFORNIA 2116 E. Walnut Ave. Fullerton, CA		
DECEMBER	**7** MIAMI, FLORIDA 1787 N. W. 79 Avenue Miami, Florida	**14** FULLERTON, CALIFORNIA 2116 E. Walnut Ave. Fullerton, CA	**21** SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA Santa Clara Fairground Gateway Hall, 344 Tully Rd. San Jose, CA	

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	2	2	"Unidos Para Siempre"	Los Tigres Del Norte
	3	7	"Mundo De Amor"	Los Tucanes De Tijuana
	4	3	"Rock Nativo"	Banda Zeta
	5	1	"Y Sus Canciones"	Vicente Fernadez
	6	--	"Vol. 4...Y Que Sigue La Banda"	Banda Boom
	7	--	"Desde El Cielo Y Pata Siempre"	Banda El Recodo
	8	10	"Camino De Amor"	Los Temerarios
	9	5	"Invencible"	Los Rieleros Del Norte
	10	--	"Dedicado A Mis Novias"	Exterminador
TROPICAL/SALSA	1	7	"Abriendo Puertas"	Gloria Estefan
	2	--	"Pies Descalzos"	Shakira
	3	--	"Por Derecho Propio"	Tito Rojas
	4	--	"Etnia"	Grupo Niche
	5	--	"Cachamba 96"	Kinito Mendez
	6	--	"Dicen Que Soy"	India
	7	--	"Recogiendo Frutos"	Tito Gomez
	8	9	"Mega Mix Hits"	Proyecto Uno
	9	--	"Mas Rika Que Nunca"	Rikarena
	10	--	"Fresco"	Jerry Rivera
POP	1	2	"En Pleno Vuelo"	Marco Antonio Solis
	2	4	"Varius Artists"	Macarena Mix
	3	10	"Enrique Iglesias"	Enrique Iglesias
	4	--	"Mariachi Y Tradicion"	Mazz
	5	--	"Nada Es Igual"	Luis Miguel
	6	8	"Mujeriego"	Jose Jose
	7	--	"Ardiente"	Gary Hobbs
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	9	--	"El Deseo De Oir Tu Voz"	Cristian
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Ameridarts in 19" Dynamo	450

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Oct. 17-19
West Virginia Music and Vending Association Expo and Convention, Ramada Inn, South Charleston, W. Va. Contact WVMVA, (304)744-4741, fax (304)744-4525.

October 19-20
Orlando Collectors Expo, Orlando Florida Fairgrounds. Contact Chip Nofal, phone or fax, (904)928-0666.

October 19-21
World Waterpark Association Trade Show, Broward County Convention Center, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. Contact Patty Miller, (913)599-0300; fax (913)599-0520.

October 27-28
Amusement and Music Operators of Virginia Convention and Trade Show. Contact Bill Carnohan, (804)748-2092.

October 29-31
Amusement Industry Expo, I-X Center, Cleveland, Ohio. Call (216)265-2619; fax (216)265-2621.

October 31-November 2
National Automatic Merchandising Association National Convention and Trade Show, America's Center, St. Louis, Mo. Contact NAMA, (312)346-0370; fax (312)704-4140.

November 7-9
AMOA-NDA 3rd Annual Singles and Doubles Championships, Adams Mark Hotel, Indianapolis, Ind. Contact Mike Smythe, (800)808-9884 or (317)387-1299; fax (317)387-0999.

November 14-17
Pinball Expo/Flip-Out Tournament, Ramada Hotel, Rosemont, Ill. Contact Robert Berk, (800)323-3547 or (330)369-1192; fax (330)369-6279.

November 19-23
78th International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions Convention and Trade Show, New Orleans, La. Contact IAAPA, (703)836-4800; fax (703)836-4801.

For international events, see page 45.

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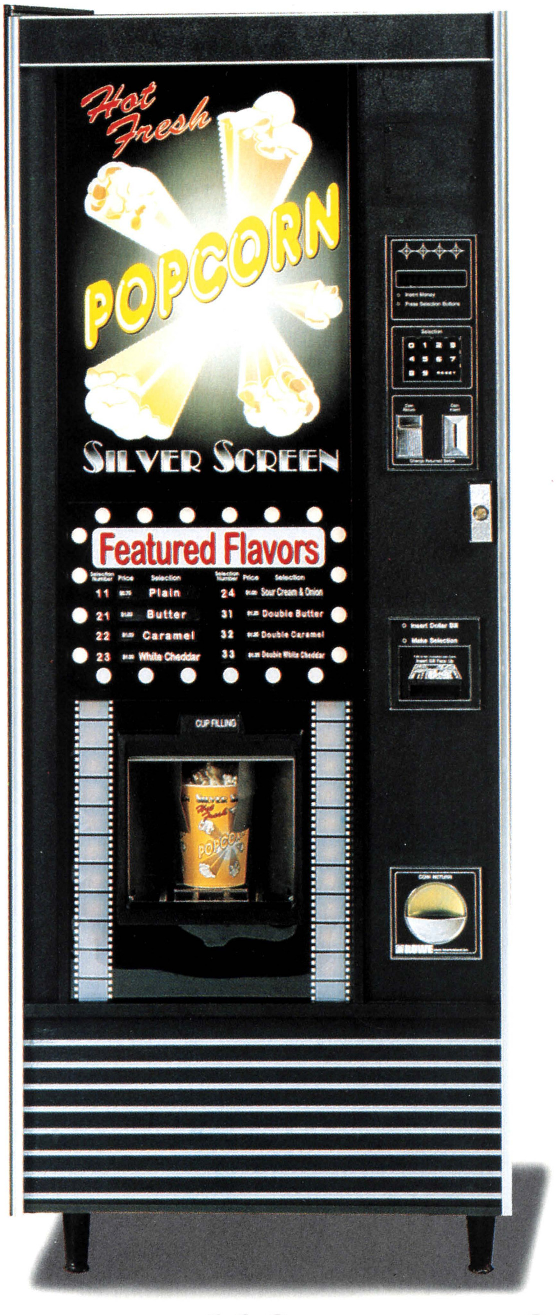
HOT AIR POPCORN VENDOR POPS UP HEALTHY SNACKS


Hot Fresh
POPCORN
SILVER SCREEN
Featured Flavors
Selection Number
Price
Selection
11 Plain
21 Butter
22 Caramel
23 White Cheddar
24 Sour Cream & Onion
31 Double Butter
32 Double Caramel
33 Double White Cheddar
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Selection
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8 9
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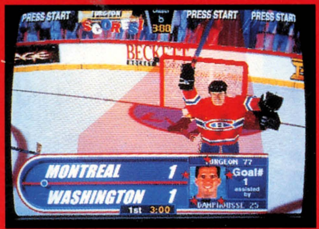
PRESS START
PRESS START
PRESS START
MONTREAL 1
WASHINGTON 1
Goal
1st 3:00

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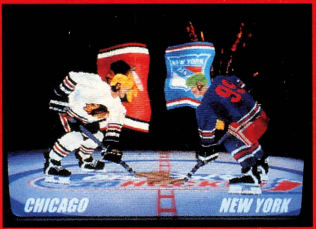
CHICAGO
NEW YORK

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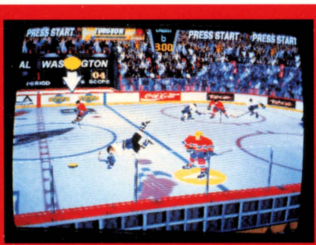
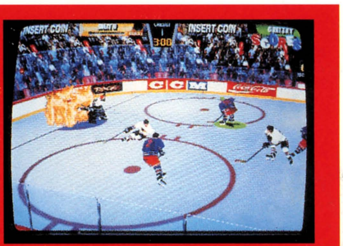

PRESS START
PRESS START
PRESS START

Great action — watch that trip!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